

*To the Rev: Edward McGuffee*  
*From his Friend and*  
*Servant*

A  
**D E F E N C E**  
O F  
**RELIGIOUS LIBERTY;**  
COMPREHENDING,

- I. The INTRODUCTION; containing a true State of the Matters judged upon by the late CONSOCIATION, from their Rise until laid before that venerable Body.
- II. PROTESTATION against the Doings and Procedure of CONSOCIATION at WEST-STAFFORD, with the Reasons of it at large.
- III. STRICTURES on the REPORT of a certain anonymous COMMITTEE.

Concluding with

An ADDRESS to the Reverend **ELDERS**  
Of the late CONSOCIATION at STAFFORD,

A N D

An Address to the **PEOPLE** of CONNECTICUT.

---

By **ISAAC FOSTER, A. M.**  
Pastor of the Church in WEST-STAFFORD. *K*

---

My Brethren have dealt deceitfully as a Brook, as the Stream of Brooks  
they pass away. *JOB.*

Who art thou that judgeth another Man's Servant? To his own Master he  
standeth or falleth. *ST. PAUL.*

Since Religion is the Means of procuring us Acceptance with God, it neces-  
sarily follows, that every Man has an undoubted Right to judge for him-  
self. *DR. FOSTER.*

No Bishop or Presbyter, no Synod or Council, no Church or Assembly of  
Men, since the Days of Inspiration, hath Power derived to them from  
God, to make Creeds or Articles of Faith for us, and impose them upon  
our Understandings. *DR. WATTS.*

---

MASSACHUSETTS-BAY:  
WORCESTER, Print by **ISAIAH THOMAS.**  
MD. CLXXX.





## ADVERTISEMENT.

**I**T is proper to inform the Public that at the time of the gathering the Church at West-Stafford, which was done by the Council that ordained me, neither myself, nor the Church adopted Say-Brook Platform, or any other of human composition; though both Say-Brook and Cambridge were taken under consideration; but agreed to receive the Bible as the only authentick and infallible rule of faith and discipline: And proceeding upon this divine Platform, we have ever enjoyed the greatest harmony until our peace was broke in upon by the contentious and disobedient, aided and abetted by our brethren of the vicinity; and when our former christian love and concord will again be restored, we leave with the meek and peaceable Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our law-giver, king and judge, while we endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, that we may be called the children of God.

Previous to the Session of the late Consociation at West-Stafford, the Church in this place came to the following resolve, viz.

“ At a meeting of the second Church of Christ in Stafford, at the meeting-house, October 20th, 1779 :

“ It was put to the Church to signify, by their vote, whether they were now of the same mind respecting the Scriptures of the Old and New

*Testament, as expressed in their covenant drawn up and subscribed to, at the time of the gathering of this church, in which are these words, " We take the scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the only infallible rule of our faith and practice, submitting ourselves to Jesus Christ, as only Lord of conscience, calling no man in this sense master and lord, for one is our master and lord who is in heaven : " That as you have never admitted any rule of doctrine, or platform of discipline, but God's word, so you never will ; but constantly reject whatever shall be proposed to you by any man or body of men, that has nothing better for its authority than the opinion of men, though of the greatest name and fame, that your faith may stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Fully agreeing in that well known protestant opinion, as clearly founded on the word of God, that no man, or number of men, seperated or united in council, since the time of Christ and his Apostles, have any right to decide in matters of faith : That it is inconsistent with the respect due to Christ for any to attempt it.*

15 OCT 61

*" Voted, In the affirmative, Nem. Con."*

*A true copy of record, Attest.*

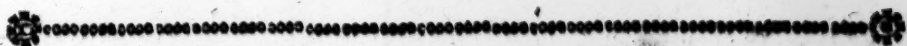
ISAAC FOSTER, Pastor.

*The above vote of the Church, with the reasons of my protest against the jurisdiction of Consociation, were laid before that body.*





A D E F E N C E  
OF  
RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, &c.



- I. INTRODUCTION: *Containing a true State of the Matters judged upon by the late Confociation, from their Rise until laid before that venerable Body.*

FROM the time of my first settling with the people in *West-Stafford*, (which was October 31, 1764) until the year 1778, I lived as happily with them as any Minister upon the Continent with his people, perhaps: I loved the people, and to serve their best interest in public and private, in sickness and health, was my delightful employ; while I received, in return, many testimonies of their cordial and sincere regard to me, and for the truth's sake which I preached unto them; which, in many instances, appeared to have a good effect upon them: On which account I had reason to rejoice that I had not

run in vain, nor laboured in vain among them.

In 1778 my salary, which according to agreement was sixty pounds lawful money annually, by the depreciation of Continental money, was become almost nothing ; so that I found myself obliged to ask for some allowance to be made me. In March 1778, a meeting of the society was called to see if they would afford me any help. At this time those who were entrusted with the prudentials of the society were chiefly strangers, newly come to reside in the place, and by rendering themselves popular had got into places of trust : An error this in the people which I would caution all other societies against. The Committee opposed any thing's being done for me in a parish way ; that which they chiefly urged, was that it would oppress the poor, &c.---The society, which had been used to peace before, seemed much surprised to see a fire kindled ; and to put out the same, a number of the principal inhabitants proposed to me, at the time of the meeting, to accept of a subscription for that year, to which I consented in case it were adequate ; to bring this about they desired an adjournment of the meeting, which was granted. At the adjourned meeting I signified my acceptance of what was subscribed, and so the difficulty seemed to subside for the pre-

sent. Nevertheless I could often hear of the Committee's telling one and another, that it was unreasonable to allow me any more than the nominal sum, and whatever they did more was over and above their contract with me ; that they were under no obligation to do it, and the like. Towards the close of this year, the Committee, without being desired by me, came to my house and told me, they understood that I was uneasy with my salary and wanted some help from the people ; and as there would be business enough on the annual meeting, without that, they thought it best, if I was willing, to have a meeting called on purpose to settle the matter relative to my salary. I told them I was willing if they tho't best, and had mentioned it to one of them some time before, that I had thoughts of desiring an interview with the Committee ; they then asked me, what my request was ? I told them that they knew the whole affair as well as I, a bare support was all I asked for ; I was willing to bear an equal part of the burdens of the present day, and would give up one quarter of my salary, if the parish would make the rest good, giving me forty-five pounds as good as it used to be. One of them, upon this, asked me how I would have the warning drawn ? I told him that it was not my business to make warnings, they knowing the affair, were quite able to do that. Another



spoke and said, we must warn the society to come together, to see what addition they would make to the salary. I told them I thought it not proper to talk of addition to the salary, when I offered to give up one quarter of it. They told me that sixty pounds was sixty pounds, and if the society paid that, they fulfilled their agreement with me, and if they allowed me any more it would be by way of addition. I asked them, if they thought sixty pounds Continental money was equivalent to the society's agreement with me? They told me they thought it was; and two of them said they should never hold up their hands for my having any more, and added that they believed that the greater part of the parish was of their minds: The other said, it did not belong to them to determine the matter, the parish might do as they saw fit. I told them that if the society was of their minds, I should be glad to know it, that I might know what to do, and accordingly desired a meeting; they therefore warned a meeting to see what the society would *add* to my salary. I wrote to the society, which was read in the meeting, shewing them that I did not want an addition, but was willing to give up a quarter part, as I had told the Committee: The event was that the society refused to act upon the warning. The annual meeting soon came; the society dropped these

men, and put in a new Committee ; at which they appeared extremely offended both with me and the people : And now they began to fault my preaching, and to form a party in the parish. No stone was left unturned to disaffect all they could influence towards my preaching ; and whatever I said in public was perverted and condemned as heretical and damnable. One of them left the communion. A few days after, being at my house, I asked him the reason of his conduct in withdrawing from communion ? He told me it was owing to his being offended with me and the church : I asked what we had done to offend him ? He told me that I preached doctrines he thought were false, and the Church received them. I told him he was wrong in leaving the communion until he had given me and the church notice of his uneasiness and endeavoured to set us right, if wrong ; and would never be justified in doing as he had, and read to him some passages in Cambridge Platform, which he professed to like, and which condemned such practice. He then told me he had done nothing without advice from a neighbouring *Clergyman*, who told him he could not be blamed for leaving the communion when he pleaded. I discoursed with him two several times, and laboured to convince him of his error ; but all was in vain, he supported himself upon

the advice of this *Clergyman*, but refused to tell me his name, though I have since discovered who the *Clergyman* is ; he lives in a neighbouring town, and was a *member of the late Consociation*. This delinquent member, nevertheless, has had the *audacity* to deny that I ever faulted him for withdrawing from communion. In June last the *Association* set at my house, a few days before which *Solomon Bixby* brought a paper to me containing ten *articles of charge* against my doctrines, which he said he intended to lay before the *Association*, desiring me to read the same, and say whether I owned them or not ; I read them, and observed to him that they were generally false as they lay in the charge, and not one of them expressed as I had expressed myself upon those matters : He then desired me to draw a complaint myself, that I would be willing to own, as he depended upon me for proof ; I told him, I was willing to do it, but had not time then. The *Association* met, and he appeared and presented his complaint as he had shown it me before, without any signers but himself, though in behalf of others : Upon the *Association's* insisting that the others referred to should subscribe said complaint with him, he procured three others, viz. *Samuel Fuller, Zephaniah Alden, and Benjamin Ellis*. The *Association* asked me whether I owned the



charge? I told them that in general it was wrong, but that there were some things so near the truth, that I thought it would be dishonourable to deny them. I was then desired to point out what I owned; I did so, which were four of the articles. The *Association* then went into the consideration of what should be done; I told them that I supposed they had no cognizance of the case--one of the members told me I was mistaken, and added, "I had a *hint* of this, and therefore put the Platform in my pocket," and taking it out read a passage about heresy, &c.---I told him I had not the same notions of heresy that he had: Another replied, "*why all error is heresy*:" I then concluded to leave them to proceed as they pleased without making any opposition at that time. They soon resolved upon a committee to meet on future time to confer on matters, and proposed the same to me; I told them that as I had been publicly accused, I chose to defend myself in public, should therefore choose that the *Consociation* be convoked if they judged the matter cognizable by them; but that was declined: I then told them that I would not converse with the committee, but if they desired it, would send them, in writing, a defence of what I owned of said charge. Accordingly the Committee was appointed to meet at the Rev. Mr. Perry's, Sep-

tember 1.---I wrote them according to promise. They advised to calling the *Consociation*, but referred that matter to the next *Association*, in October. The *Association* advising a convocation of the *Consociation*, letters were accordingly issued out for that purpose, and their session appointed to be the first Tuesday in November, at the house of *Ebenezer Gay* at *Stafford*. A few days before the session of laid *Consociation*, I received an open paper informing me of the approach of that venerable body to hear and pass judgment on my creed, and requiring me to appear before them, signed "*Theodore Hinsdale, Charles Backus, members of Consociation.*" On the day appointed about one half the *Consociation* met at the time and place.

---

## II. PROTESTATION *against the* DESIGN *and* PROCEDURE of CONSOCIATION at WEST-STAFFORD, *with the* REASONS of *it at large.*

**A**S soon as the *Consociation* was opened I desired, and with great difficulty at length obtained, leave to read them a paper, in which I denied their jurisdiction and right to judge on articles of faith, or make a creed for me ; reminded them that the divine displeasure had been always testified against



those who had presumtuously undertaken to frame creeds, judge on articles of faith for others, and impose subscription. I complained also of injurious and abusive treatment in the paper sent me, notifying me to appear before Confociation *as judges*; and plainly told that venerable body, that unless they explicitly disavowed those words *judge* and *require*,\* in their notification, I should consider myself in duty bound to publish it as approved by them, that the United States of America might be sensible what they had yet to expect from the dying struggles of the *man of sin*. I told them I should never meet them again when *required* so to do; but should always be ready and cheerful to wait on them, when desired with decency as a *brother* and *equal*. That I could not submit to them as judges of my faith, without denying the kingly authority of Jesus Christ, until they should produce a commission, with the seal of Heaven affixed to it, constituting them infallible dictators in matters of religion. I desired and even challenged a public disputation with them, on any points of religion wherein they were pleased to differ from me: And finally put the following questions to them, for a resolution, viz.

---

\* It is very plain in the original of the notification sent me, that the word *require*, was first written *request*: But it seems this word was too gentle, pacific and humane, to suit with the haughtiness and arrogance of the subscribers, and therefore was changed, on second thought, for the word *require*.



I. Have you any authority to judge of doctrines, respecting their agreement or disagreement with the gospel, that we have not ?

II. Is your judgment, as such, in any measure binding on us ?

III. What authority have you to require us to appear before you, and answer to a complaint that we teach and hold doctrines contrary to the gospel ?

IV. Have we not the same authority, upon report made to us by vile informers, that you teach doctrines contrary to the gospel, to require you to appear before us, and make answer to charges, that you have to require us to appear before you ?

I then observed to Consociation, that such lust for power and domination, as but too evidently appeared in them, would illy suit such a free air as we breathed in this country ; and that they unhappily came into existence too late for the exercise of spiritual tyranny : And then retired, assuring Consociation of my readiness to wait on them at any time, if treated with civility, as a brother and equal.

Consociation, before their leaving the meeting-house, where they were when this paper was exhibited, voted that it was no bar in the way of their procedure : And adjourned to the house of Mr. *Ebenezer Gay*.

My paper was exhibited November 2, the first day of the session of Confociation, towards night. The next day, about two o'clock, P. M. I received the following paper from Confociation, signed by *Aaron Church*, Scribe, containing a reply to my questions.

" The Confociation, taking into consideration the matters contained in the Rev. Mr. *Isaac Foster's* paper, publickly read yesterday, make answer to his questions, as follows,

" Question I. *Have you any authority to judge concerning doctrines, respecting their agreement or disagreement with the gospel, that we have not ?*

" *Answer.* You as pastor and church, have a sole right to judge for yourselves what doctrines agree with the gospel ; before you confociated with these churches you had a right to judge for yourselves, whether the doctrines we professed so far agreed with the gospel, that you could consistent therewith have christian and ministerial communion with us. You have now undoubtedly a right to judge for yourselves, whether the laws of Christ permit you to continue in fellowship with us. We only claim to ourselves as pastors and churches the same rights with respect to you.

" Question II. *Is your judgment, as such, with regard to doctrines, in any measure binding on us ?*

" *Answer.* No further than it agrees with the word of God.

" *Question III.* *What authority have you to require us to appear before you, and answer to a complaint that we teach doctrines contrary to the gospel?*

" *Answer.* None at all that implies in us, as Pastors and Churches, any pre-eminence of rank or order above the pastor and church in *West-Stafford*. All the authority we claim is founded, *First*, In that endearing relation between all christian pastors, as fellow servants of the same Lord, and members of the same body; which necessarily implies a mutual care for, and watchfulness over each other. *Second*, That christian love which inclines us to perform that duty towards you, which is required by the relation aforesaid. *Third*, On the right we claim to judge for ourselves with whom Christ permits us to hold communion, and from whom he charges us to withdraw for the sake of our own purity and preservation. *Fourth*, The example of the church at *Jerusalem* with regard to unsound doctrine taught in the *Gentile* churches, *Acts* xv. and the exhortation given to *Timothy* to charge some at *Ephesus* that they teach no other doctrine, *1. Tim.* i. 3. *Fifth*, Your union with us as a church confociated by your particular consent, founded in the foregoing christian principles, and sig-



nified and ratified by your long practice of sitting and judging with us in similar cases : In the forms of which Consociation it is agreed, ' That all cases of scandal that fall out within the circuit of any of the aforesaid Consociations, shall be brought to a council of the Elders, and also the messengers of the churches within the said circuit. That when any case is orderly brought before any council of the churches, it shall there be heard and determined ; which shall be a final issue, and all parties therein concerned shall sit down and be determined thereby.'

- " *Question IV. Have we not the same authority upon report made to us by vile informers, that you teach doctrines contrary to the gospel, to require you to appear before us and make answer to charges, that you have to require us to appear before you ?*

- " *Answer,* In the answer to the first question.

" With regard to the exceptions taken against the words require and judge, contained in the citation sent to Mr. Foster, we claim no other respect nor authority than what is founded in the forementioned principles of the communion of churches, and expressed in the constitution of consociated churches, which you, as well as we, have adopted. Nor do we mean to impose our judgment, in matters of doctrine, in any sense

or measure as binding on you, otherwise than as warranted by those principles, and that constitution. The Council do therefore hereby only signify to you, that they desire and expect you to attend and pay that regard, and no other, which is due to brother pastors and sister churches, consociated with you and the church under your pastoral care for the purposes of Christian and ministerial communion."

This is said, "A true copy from the minutes," and is attested by "Aaron Church, Scribe."

Here follow the replies to what the Consociation was pleased to call answers to my questions.

[Note. *What is put into notes under this head of replies to the Consociation's answers to my questions, was not exhibited to Consociation, but is now added. Want of time and opportunity, during the session of Consociation, obliged me to be as concise as possible in my replies to their pretended answers to my questions.*]

#### I. Reply to your first answer.

1st. I do not suppose that any Christian or society of Christians have right, from the New-Testament, to withdraw communion from an individual Christian, whether preacher or professor, or from a Christian church, except in the two instances of heresy and

scandalous immorality ; nor did I ever imagine that you was warranted by the constitution of Connecticut churches to deny Christian fellowship on any other accounts. Your Platform, if I can understand it, gives you no such right, but forbids any such thing. Confession of faith, chap. xxi. lect. 2. Preface p. 6. This right of private judgment and decision, both you and your Platform acknowledge. Now Christ hath never given individuals, nor churches, any right or privilege, the conscientious use of which will unavoidably subject them to the inconveniences and hardships attending a denial of Christian fellowship and communion : For then it would follow, that a man, by his fidelity to Christ, would, by Christ's rules, be debarred the communion of Christians ! Indeed we shall never act right, nor according to the mind of Christ in these matters, until we determine not to withdraw communion from any individual, or Church, except they either believe or act contrary to express scripture, *i. e.* are heretical or immoral. If we as individuals, or in council, should have certain doctrines and tenets referred to us, that were evidently not contrary to express scripture, purely that we might have opportunity to give our opinion concerning their agreement or disagreement with implicit or doubtful scriptures ; we



might, warrantably enough give our opinion, and tell our sense of the scriptures referred to in said doctrines and tenets : But when we say, we will not read, pray, preach or commune at Christ's table with those who differ from us in the interpretation of implicit or doubtful scriptures, we go on forbidden ground, and treat our fellow men injuriously.\*

Gentlemen, if I perfectly understood what

---

\* I would observe further upon this answer to my first question, that it is really no answer at all. My question is, 'Have you any authority to judge concerning doctrines, respecting their agreement or disagreement with the gospel, that we have not?' *Answer.* You, as pastor and church, have a sole right to judge for yourselves what doctrines agree with the gospel? Is this an answer to the question? It stands thus, 'Have you a right we have not?' *Answer.* 'You have a sole right.' The answer proceeds, 'Before you consociated with these churches you had a right to judge for yourselves, whether the doctrines we professed, so far agreed with the gospel, that you could, consistent therewith, have Christian and ministerial communion with us.' I ask again, is this a reply to my question? 'Have you a right, &c. we have not?' *Answer.* 'You had a right to judge whether you could consistently have Christian and ministerial communion with us.' The answer yet goes on; 'You have now undoubtedly a right to judge for yourselves, whether the laws of Christ permit you to continue in fellowship with us.' Again, the question is, 'Have you authority or right we have not, to judge of the agreement of doctrines with the gospel?' *Answer.* 'You have a right to judge whether you can consistently continue in fellowship with us.' The last clause of their answer is, 'We only claim, as pastors and churches, the same rights with respect to you.' What do these words 'with respect to you,' refer to? Certainly they refer to the judgment respecting the consistency or inconsistency of communing, having fellowship, &c. For they cannot refer to the first part of the answer; for it would be nonsense to say, 'You have a sole right, &c. and we claim only the same right with respect to you.' A sole right in one man does not, as I know of, have any respect to a sole right in any other man. But there is nothing about communion or fellowship in the question. These words therefore, 'with respect to you,' refer to judging on something foreign to the question, viz. the consistence or inconsistency of communing. Therefore, neither in the whole, nor in any part of this answer of the Consociation, is there to be found any answer to my question: Nor should I ever have suspected it was designed as an answer, had I not seen the word, *Answer*, wrote at the beginning of it. It had been easy for these Gentlemen to have given a direct answer to my question, if it had been consistent with the design of their convention at Stafford.

you intended by withdrawing communion; the utmost you pretend a right to do, it might possibly ease me of many present difficulties.

2dly. I never supposed, neither before nor since my consociation with you, that you held any doctrines, which forbid ministerial or Christian communion with you.

II. Question 2d. *“ Is your judgment, as such, with regard to doctrines, in any measure binding on us.”*

*Answer.* “ No further than it agrees with the word of God.”

Pray, Gentlemen, is the above a reply to the question? The question is this, Is your judgment, in point of doctrine, binding upon us? You say, or seem to say, So far as it agrees with the word of God. But who is to be judge of this agreement or disagreement of your judgment with the word of God? Am I to judge for myself, or are you to judge for me? Again, granting your judgment agreeable to scripture: Am I to receive and embrace it out of deference to to your judgment, or from a sacred regard to the divine authority? And, if from a sacred regard to the divine authority, should my judgment respecting the interpretation of implicit or doubtful scriptures differ from yours, does this give you a right to do it,

or would it justify you in withdrawing communion from me ? (a)

III. Question 3d. *'What authority have you to require us to appear before you, and answer to a complaint that we teach doctrines contrary to the gospel?'*

*Answer.* 'None at all that implies in us, as pastors and churches, any pre-eminence of rank or order above the pastor and church of *West-Stafford*.' If you, as pastors and churches, have no authority that implies any pre-eminence of rank or order above the pastor and church in *West-Stafford*; you certainly have none at all. Yet you seem to think you have some, or you would not have undertaken to give the grounds of it.

1st. For your first ground of authority. Does this 'endearing relation you speak of; or this care and watchfulness implied in it,' give one pastor a right to decide for another in matters of faith, or not? That it does, is neither self-evident, nor allowed by all men. Here you will allow me to wait for proof. If it does not give any right to decide in matters of faith, then I cannot see the pertinency of its being mentioned in this manner. The grand question is yet undecided.

---

(a) My second question is this, 'Is your judgment, *as such*, with regard to doctrines, in any measure binding on us?' Consociation answer, 'No further than it agrees with the word of God.' Here, as in their answer to my first question, they evidently evade giving a direct and pertinent answer. I did not ask them whether their judgment, if it agreed with the word of God, was binding on us; but whether their judgment, *as such*, was binding?



2dly. Is the 'duty required,' an exercise of a right in one pastor to decide in articles of faith for another? The grand thing in question is yet undecided.

3dly. The things which are essential to Christian communion and fellowship are either left to be decided by man's judgment, or they are decided by Christ, either expressly or by indubitable consequences of what is expressed. If these essentials of Christian communion be left to be decided by human judgment, then one man hath as good a right to judge what and how many they are, as any other man. And if every man hath an equal right, &c. then no man hath any right to impose his judgment concerning these essentials, &c. on any other man: Because the right any one man hath to impose his judgment on another, supposes this other to have no right to judge for himself. Then also no public body of men have a right to impose their judgment, concerning the essentials of Christian communion on any other public body, or on any individual. Because the imposition destroys the idea of a right in the public body, or the individual imposed upon, to judge in this case, contrary to the supposition. The right any public body has to impose their judgment, is certainly made up of the *sum total* of their individual rights. If no individual therefore has any right to im-

pose his judgment on any man, then no public body hath : For ever so many cyphers will not amount to a *sum*. By this it is undeniably evident that the essentials of church-communion are not left to be decided by men. If these essentials, &c. are decided and determined by Christ, whether it be expressly or by the indubitable consequences of what is expressed ; the matter is plain, and mankind are not subjected to any of those great inconveniences attending the various and differing decisions of fallible men.

Fourthly. To this reply several things.

*First.* The doctrines taught by those who went from *Judea* to *Antioch* did not concern the essentials of Christian communion, at that time, nor of salvation, *Acts*, xv. II, 21. *Burkitt* and *Henry* on the 21st verse.

*Second.* No withdrawing of communion was so much as dreamed of by either side in this dispute.

*Third.* If the doctrines taught by those men had regarded the essentials of religion, the council at *Jerusalem* had sufficient authority to decide upon them ; verse 28. Their decrees were of divine authority, dictated and directed by the Holy Ghost. When the Consociation, now convened in this place will be pleased to show their authority to preface their result with these words, " It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us," I shall

readily acknowledge the pertinency of mentioning the council at *Jerusalem*, as a precedent for their convention and procedure; until then I must view it altogether impertinent: And do really judge the Consociation would view it so too, had they scriptures to mention that were pertinent to their purpose. (b)

To the quotation 1 *Tim.* i. 3. Gentlemen, is it an article in the charge exhibited to you, that the pastor of the church in *West-Stafford*, entertains his people with "fables and endless genealogies," &c. I am perfectly ashamed to see scriptures thus quoted! and I beg, Gentlemen, you would never let it be known, out of your own body, that these texts were used under these circumstances.

5thly. "Answer."——I am utterly ignorant of any union I ever formed with you, which was signified and ratified by my long

---

(b) Mr. Hart, in his remarks on a late Pamphlet wrote by Mr. Hobart, &c. says, p. 4. "And he," i. e. Mr. Hobart, "introduces Dr. Increase Mather, as answering such an enquire, *Where have we an institution for synods?* That, *we have scripture example for a synod*, referring to the case of the disputants at *Antioch*, agreeing that *Paul and Barnabas* should go up to *Jerusalem*, to the Apostles and elders about that question which so much perplexed them. But with submission, this reference of this case was not to a *synod*, or council of churches, but to the Apostles and Elders at *Jerusalem*. And if I knew where to find a church, in which there were any of the holy Apostles yet living, I should be for an immediate reference of all questions and controversies about doctrines to them, as invested by *Christ himself*, with a decisive authority. The most that can be made of this example is, that it carries in it an intimation to particular ministers and churches, not to be willful in their controversies among themselves; but when they find their debates cannot bring them to a mutual agreement, in any cases of difficulty, that it is expedient for them to seek light and counsel from other ministers, or churches, or other wise Christians."



practice of sitting and judging with you in similar cases, since I have no remembrance that a *similar case* ever came under the consideration of the Consociation since I commenced a member : For other matters, besides religious opinions and articles of faith, have ever been under consideration whenever I have attended Consociation, so far as I am able to recollect.

As to the article in the administration of church discipline you refer to, if the article has respect to cases of *heresy* and *scandal*, we object not : But would observe that it is nothing to the purpose for which it is cited. If it has regard to religious sentiments and articles of faith, we utterly disclaim it. *First*, Because it at once annihilates the right of private judgment ; erects an infallible tribunal on earth ; and gives men liberty to usurp Christ's throne. *Second*, It would involve the compilers of the Platform in a gross contradiction ; see Confession of Faith, chap. 21. Sect. 2d. As to the third article to which you refer, respecting cases of scandal, &c. I would ask, How is this to your purpose ? Do you suppose it is a scandal, a shame and disgrace, for a man to believe for himself ? *i. e.* a censurable evil ? Is one man's differing from another in his creed, a scandalous thing, and does it render him unfit for Christian communion ? This cannot

be : For then we should all, in this respect, be scandalous creatures ; since, perhaps, it would be impossible to find two men who believed just alike in religious matters. Yet, if we grant that two men might thus agree, they might nevertheless differ from a third man, which would be a shame to them. Further, the worthy compilers of the Confession of Faith did not look upon it scandalous for a man to be allowed liberty of conscience and right of private judgment ; see Confession of Faith, Chap. xxi. Sect. 2d. Hence you see the Platform is not a volunteer in your service, but draughted. By this the Gentlemen of the Consociation may be sensible how they have misinterpreted our venerable ancestors, the compilers of the Platform.

You are so far from taking up the words *require* and *judge*, that what you observe is rather an avowal of your right and authority to use and apply them in the form you have done. But be intreated, Gentlemen, to give yourselves time for reflection. The term *require* imports authority the requirer has over the required. Now I ask, Who gave you this pre-eminence in point of authority ? From what source did it derive ? Is it ' from Heaven, or of men ? ' If from Heaven, it is in the Bible ; and if in the Bible, pray point me to the grant and form of investiture. If

of men, Have not the popish and episcopal churches the same authority, and derived from the same source ?

I include both terms, as the authority in exercise both in requiring and judging must be the same.

These replies were sent to, and received by, Consociation while sitting in *West-Stafford*; but never answered.\*

A public disputation, oral or by writing, upon any points of doctrine, in which I differed from Consociation, was often requested by me and a committee of the church in *West-Stafford*, and as often refused by Consociation.

WHEN Consociation were together in the meeting-house, the first day of their sessions, Nov. 2d, 1779, and had heard the paper read by the Rev. *Isaac Foster*, containing his denial of their jurisdiction, &c. the Rev. *Dan Foster*, a member of Consociation, entered his protestation against the design and procedure of Consociation, and desired liberty to offer his reasons for said protestation pub-

---

\* From the above answers and reply, every reader of discernment will see, *First*. That the pretended answers of Consociation to my questions, are in reality no answers but evasions; and evasions greatly studied and laboured. *Second*. That plain, pertinent, express answers to said questions, such as an honest, upright man would have given to them, would at once have divested Consociation of all that authority they saw fit to assume; left them without any pretence whatever, to vindicate the high popish claim, on which they grounded their proceedings, and obliged them to evacuate their quarters, and retreat without planting their standard.



licly, and at that time ; but was prevented offering them then, by reason of objections made to it by several members of Confociation. In the evening following, however, liberty was obtained to read the paper, containing the reasons of the protestation, to Confociation, though in a much more private way than that in which it was desired to be read, and in which the protestation had been made. For this reason, among others, the paper is now made public. What is in the text only was read to Confociation ; the notes and quotations in them have been added since, as a confirmation of the sentiment ; or at least to shew that, if the author errs in sentiment, he does not err *alone*, but in company, and in very respectable company too.

*Gentlemen of this venerable Confociation,*

I had, the other day, the disagreeable opportunity to read a citation sent to the Rev. *Isaac Foster*, Pastor of the second church in *Stafford* ; which is as follows,

“ *Reverend Sir,*

“ Representation having been made to the north Association in Hartford county, that you teach sundry articles of doctrine, as contained in a paper, dated May 25th, 1779, signed by *Solomon Bixby* and others, members of the second society in *Stafford* ; which doctrines they look upon as dangerous and contrary to the Gospel : Upon which also

they desired the advice and direction of the Association. The Association having taken opportunity for inquiry and information in the case, have advised, that it is highly expedient that the Consociation of this district be convened as soon as may be with convenience, to hear and *judge* on the premises.

" This is therefore to desire and *require* you to appear before said Consociation, to be convened at the house of Mr. *Ebenezer Gay*, in said second society in *Stafford*, on the first Tuesday in November next, at 10 o'clock, A.M. to *answer to the charges* contained in the paper before mentioned.

" THEODORE HINSDALE, } Members of the Consoci-  
 " CHARLES BACKUS, } ation; in the absence of  
 the last Moderator,  
 Dated " *Windsor*, October 20th, 1779."

That one ambassador of Jesus Christ should be *required* by another, to appear before an earthly tribunal, to *answer to charges* respecting *doctrines and articles of religious faith*, certainly favours strongly of spiritual tyranny and despotism. Have these Gentlemen really espoused that *old, trite, unreasonable, anti-scriptural, bloody, persecuting, popish maxim*, " That the church," or any body of men on earth, " has a right to decree articles of faith !" No. And is it imagined, that the decrees of an ecclesiastick council concerning doctrines and articles of faith

imposed upon an *American*, will be readily received and acquiesced in ?

Will *Americans*, true and genuine sons of the fair Goddess Liberty ; who have been for several years, and still are, struggling with all the horrors of war, facing the blazing cannon, encountering nameless perils, difficulties, dangers and deaths, to establish her on the throne of these United States, and confirm her salutiferous, balmy regency in this land : Will these, I ask, subscribe creeds, articles of faith, and confessionals, drawn up and imposed on them by the clergy and ecclesiastick councils and synods ! Will they, who neither fled nor submitted at the roar of cannon, and the sound of martial arms in the day of battle, be terrified and awed into submission by the baneless and innoxious thunder of the vatican ! Gentlemen, I certainly do not mean to speak diminutively of the clergy, or of ecclesiastical conventions : But I affirm, that no clergyman, or number of clergymen, or ecclesiastick council, of whatever denomination, have right to make religious creeds, canons, or articles of faith, and impose them on any man, or church, on earth, requiring subscription to them.

As an evidence, yea, a demonstration of the negative of this question, let it be observed, that the business of creed-making never did any good in the church, never promot-



ed the truth, or suppressed *heresy* ; but always, without exception, had the contrary effect.

Some of the peculiar tenets of *Arius* were esteemed by the Emperor *Constantine the Great*, and some part of the Christian church, perhaps, heretical and dangerous. Upon this *letters missive* were issued out by the *moderator* of the first general ecclesiastick council, *Constantine*, to the bishops of the several provinces of the empire, to meet at *Nice* in *Bythinia*, A. D. 325. Accordingly great numbers of the bishops convened together at time and place, with great *punctuality*, *gravity* and *solemnity* ! The fulsom encomiums given this august and venerable assembly of bishops, presbyters, deacons, &c. by some partial historians of the court-party of that day, I shall never undertake to repeat : But only to enquire what good this convention did, and whether they suppressed the *Arian heresy*, and prevented the rising of others, or not ? And I know not that I can do this better than by reciting the words of President *Dickison* concerning this council, as I find him quoted. “ The synod of *Nice* did indeed impose subscriptions ; but what was the consequence, but horrible schisms, convulsions and confusions, until the church was crumbled into parts and parties, each uncharitably anathematizing one another ? Never

was the church infested with such a swarm of *hereticks* and *heresies*, as sprang from that corrupt fountain of imposition and subscription. The *Arians* were not only strengthened in their *heresy*, and increased in their numbers by their persecution ; but there was quickly added to them the black catalogue of *Eustathians*, *Macedonians*, *Anomoioi*, *Eunomians*, *Photinians*, *Luciferians*, *Anthropomorphites*, *Apollonirians*, *Dimeritæ*, *Massiliani*, *Antidicomorianitæ*, *Collyridiani*, *Metangismonitæ*, *Psathirians*, *Eutychians*, *Seleuciani*, *Patriciani*, with a long and almost endless *et cætera*. All which *heresies* rose out of the bottomless pit, in about seventy years space, in the same church. Whence one council was convened after another, to draw up new creeds, and impose new subscriptions, until almost every article of Christianity was both condemned and established. This was the mark set by providence upon the first subscription of this kind, that was ever imposed in the world ; and this the defence and propagation that followed from it. The churches of *New-England* have all continued from their first foundation non-subscribers ; and yet retain their first faith and love. From all this I think, it naturally follows, that subscription is not necessary for the being, or well-being of the church ; unless hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions and here-

sies are necessary to that end." Thus far the judicious and learned President concerning the consequences of creed-making and subscription practised by this venerable council. And whoever will be at the pains of searching ecclesiastick history for the consequences of the other six general synods, will certainly find, that *heresies* innumerable, strifes, divisions and sub-divisions, with an endless train of evils, followed them all.\*

---

\* The consequences of creed-making and subscription practised in the church of Christ, presented to the reader in the following faithful abstract of ecclesiastick history for the space of four hundred years.

The council of *Nice*, the first œcumenical or general council, condemned the religious tenets and sentiments of *Arius*, A. D. 325. Prodigious troubles immediately arose. Some held with the council, others with *Arius*. A. D. 330, *Arius* was recalled from banishment by *Constantine the Great*; and the severe laws against him were repealed. *Athanasius*, one of the most violent against *Arius*, in the *Nicene* council, was, in his turn, banished into *Gaul*, A. D. 335, by the council of *Tyre*. Then the Arian party flourished again. The people of *Alexandria* refused to admit *Arius* to communion. *Constantine* commands *Alexander* the bishop of *Constantinople* to admit him to the communion. After the death of *Constantine the Great*, *Constantius* held with the Arians: *Constantine* and *Constantine* Emperors of the West, with the council of *Nice*. Hence arose endless animosities and seditions, treacherous plots, and open acts of injustice and violence between the two contending parties, the Arians and Nicenians. Council was assembled after council, council against council, and their jarring and contradictory decrees spread perplexity and confusion throughout the whole Christian world. *Constantine* was assassinated, A. D. 350. A great part of the western empire, particularly *Rome* and *Italy*, fell soon into the hands of his brother *Constantius*. This change was extremely unfavourable to the adherents to the decrees of the council of *Nice*. This Emperor's attachment to the Arians induced him to involve their adversaries in countless troubles and miseries. He compelled great numbers to embrace Arianism; among others *Liberius* the Roman Pontiff, A. D. 357. The *Nicene* party meditated reprisals, and waited only a fit opportunity, &c. to avenge themselves. Indeed the history of the church, during the reign of *Constantius*, presents the reader with a perpetual scene of tumult and violence, and the deplorable spectacle of a war carried on between brothers, without religion, justice or humanity, on account of their differing sentiments in religion! The death of *Constantius*, A. D. 362, changed considerably the face of religious affairs, and diminished greatly the strength and influence of the Arian party. *Julian* bestowed his favours and protection on neither side.—*Jovian*, his successor, favoured the *Nicene* doctrine, and immediately the whole west, with a



And this was not only so before, but has constantly been the case, ever since the glorious reformation from popery begun in *England* by *Wickliff*, and afterwards advanced in *Germany* by *Martin Luther* and *John Calvin*, &c. Only cast an eye on the history of the *Protestant Non-conformists* and *Puritans*, the worthy ancestors from whom we sprang ; and view the intolerable grievances, hardships, sufferings, imprisonments and

---

considerable part of the eastern empire, changed sides, conformed to the decrees of the council of *Nice*, and abjured the Arian system. A good evidence that this religious controversy was espoused and carried on from views of religion and conscience !

The scene however soon changed again, when *Valentinian* and his brother *Valens* were raised to the empire, A. D. 364. *Valentinian* adhered to the decrees of the *Nicene* council ; and hence the whole Arian sect, a few churches only excepted, were destroyed and extirpated in the west. *Valens*, on the other hand, favoured the Arians ; and his zeal for their cause exposed their adversaries the *Nicenians*, in the eastern provinces, to many severe trials and sufferings. These troubles however ended with the death of this Emperor, who fell in a battle against the *Goths*, A. D. 378. He was succeeded by *Gratian*, a friend to the *Nicenians*, and a restorer of their tranquillity. *Theodosius the Great*, however, who succeeded him, raised his terrible violence against the Arians ; and rendered the decrees of the council of *Nice* triumphant over all opposition ; so that the barbarous nations, the *Burgundians*, *Goths* and *Vandals* were the only professors of Arianism in public, because not conquered. In this long and shocking contest between the *Nicenians* and Arians, it will be difficult to determine which party most exceeded the bounds of probity, charity and moderation. The members of the Arian sect were wretchedly torn into factions, which regarded each other with the bitterest aversion. The ancient writers make mention of these under the names of Semi-Arians, Eusebians, Aetians, Eunomians, Acacians, Psathyrians and others.—The Arian controversy produced new sects, occasioned by the indiscreet lengths to which the contending parties pushed their respective opinions. Many who opposed Arianism ran headlong into systems of doctrine as bad or worse. Others who defended them went further than their chief, and thus fell into errors much more extravagant than those he embraced. Hence arose the Apollinarians, Marcellians, the Photinians, whose leader, Photinus of *Sirmicum*, was chastised not only by the *Nicenians*, in the councils of *Antioch* \* and *Milan*, in the years 345 and 347, and that

\* *Dr. Lardner* says this council at *Antioch* was held by the Eusebians, or Arians, not by the Orthodox, or Nicenians, as *Dr. Mosheim* asserts. *Credibility*, &c. vol. ix. p. 13.

deaths they endured in *England* and other parts of *Europe* : And whoever can read their history with dry eyes and an unfeeling heart, is born of the rocks indeed ! But wherefore did these worthies, these martyrs for the testimony of *Jesus*, suffer all this ? The answer is ready ; they were *non-subscribers* ; the Bible contained their only *credenda*. They owned no other *Lord* of conscience but *Jesus Christ*. They held themselves accountable

---

that at *Sirmicum*, without date ; but by the *Arians* also, in an assembly of theirs at *Sirmicum*, 351. Then *Macedonius*, bishop of *Constantinople*, arose, who was sent into exile by the influence of the *Eunomians*, by the council of *Constantinople*, A. D. 381, which is commonly called the second general or œcumenical council. A great number of other sects arose in about 70 or 80 years after the first *Nicene* council, though of less note than those mentioned above ; all owing their rise to the corrupt and abominable practice of subscription, set on foot by that council.

Early in the 5th cent. A. D. 404, the council, overcome by the importunity of *St. Augustin*, bishop of *Hippo*, were prevailed with to send a deputation of their body from *Carthage* to the Emperor *Honorius*, requesting that the laws might be put in force against the *Donatists*, a sect still very numerous. The Emperor was not so forward for persecuting men on account of their religious tenets as these *holy fathers* ; and therefore only ordered a fine to be imposed on those of that sect, that would not return into the bosom of the church. But it seems his humanity and lenient temper were put to too severe a test by a second deputation sent from those followers and imitators of the meek and lowly *Jesus*, assembled at *Carthage*, A. D. 407, importuning him, that the laws made in 405, entitled *acts of uniformity*, might be put in force and more strictly executed against the *Donatists*. Though this faction of the *Donatists* was much broken by these reiterated shocks ; yet it mightily revived again, after the death of *Stiticho*, who was put to death by the order of *Honorius*. The gentleness and humanity of *Honorius* got the better of his prejudices again, and in 409, he published a law in favour of *liberty of conscience*, and prohibited all compulsion in matters of religion. But this law was not of long continuance. What could be the reason of its discontinuance ? It was certainly founded upon the soundest principles of reason, policy and religion, and calculated to promote the universal good both of church and state. The answer is obvious, and the reason of its abolition most apparent. It suited not the haughty, assuming, arrogant spirits of the clergy of that day, those ghostly fathers of the church, who, failing in point of argument, wanted the civil sword to refuse their adversaries with ! The earnest and repeated solicitations of near three hundred bishops, met together at *Carthage*, in 410, prevailed with *Honorius* the Emperor to repeal and abrogate that good and salutary law ! The Tri-

to no other *Master*, for the articles of their faith. They would not sacrifice the rights of conscience to any number of creed and confession-makers on earth.

Now why have these mischievous and destructive consequences ever followed the practice of creed-making and subscription? The answer is at hand. It has been the invariable sense of all mankind in every age of the world, and of the church, that they are

---

bune Marcellinus was sent by Honorius into Africa, to put an end to this controversy: And here he met 286 Catholic bishops, and 279 of the Donatists in council; and held a conference with them of three days, and finally gave sentence in favour of the Catholics. The Donatists appealed to the Emperor, but to no purpose. This shock almost ruined the sect for a time. The Donatists however recovered their former liberty and tranquility, by means of men of more refined sentiments of honour, generosity, humanity and religion than the catholic bishops of that day; viz. the Vandals, a barbarous and savage nation of the north, who, under Genseric invaded and took the province of Africa from the Romans. But so soon as the Arians had found a secure retreat among the barbarous Goths, Suevi, Heruli, Vandals and Burgundians, and had obtained a little power, they persecuted the Nicenians to as great a degree of severity and inhumanity, as they had been persecuted by them. Genseric, and Huneric his son, the kings of those barbarous nations, pulled down the churches of those who held the divinity of Christ, sent their bishops into exile, maimed and tortured multitudes that were firm in adherence to their creed. And justified their proceedings by the examples which were set them by the Christian emperors and bishops!—Presently after this arose the sect of the Nestorians, formed by Nestorius, a Syrian, bishop of Constantinople, and a disciple of the celebrated Theodorus of Mopsuestia. The council of Nice had not decreed any thing concerning the manner or effect of the union of two natures in the saviour. Hence the bishops and doctors had, for about 100 years, expressed themselves as they pleased, concerning these things. In 428, Anastasius declaimed vehemently against giving *Mary* the title, *mother of God*, and said she ought to be called *mother of Christ*. Nestorius warmly espoused the sentiment, and hence the sect.—Cyril, of the see of Alexandria, took fire, consulted with Celestine bishop of Rome, assembled a council at Alexandria, A. D. 430, and hurled no less than 12 anathemas at the head of Nestorius. *Here is a controversy now between two bishops, of the first dignity, about a matter too, not of greater importance than the tithing of mint, anise and cumin; yet it was carried on without reason, moderation, justice, religion, or even the least shadow of humanity; because they would not tolerate each other in different sentiments!* After Cyril and Nestorius had reciprocally excommunicated each other, and exasperated each other's spirits to the utmost, a council was call-



*born free, and with equal right to judge for themselves in matters of religion. And mankind hath never yet found that the God of nature hath contradicted this common sense, in any revelation he hath been pleased to make to them. This right of judging for themselves therefore, mankind have agreed to hold as sacred from the Deity. When men of proud, haughty, assuming, arrogant spirits have attempted to infringe upon this*

---

ed by Theodosius the younger, A. D. 431, to be held at Ephesus, *which was the third œcumenical council.* In this council Cyril presided, though a party concerned, and an avowed enemy of Nestorius!! Nestorius objected against the proceedings of the council, as irregular and unjust; but, his remonstrances being without effect, he refused to comply with the summons that called him before the council. Cyril, the moderator, pushed on matters with a lawless violence, and Nestorius was judged without being heard; and, in the absence of a great number of bishops who belonged to the council, he was compared to the traitor Judas, charged with blasphemy against the divine Majesty, deprived of his episcopal dignity, and sent into exile, where he finished his days. The transactions of this council, says the historian, will appear to the candid and equitable reader in the most unfavourable light, as full of low artifice, contrary to all the rules of justice, and even destitute of the least air of common decency. *May God grant that none of our posterity may ever have occasion to read the similar transactions of an ecclesiastick council in America!* This Ephesian council, as might be well expected, instead of healing divisions, did but inflame them more and more, and almost destroyed all hope of restoring concord and tranquillity in the church. John of Antioch, and the other eastern bishops, for whose arrival Cyril had refused to wait, met at Ephesus, and pronounced against him and Memnon the bishop of that city, who was his creature, as severe a sentence as they had thundered against Nestorius. Hence arose a new and obstinate dissension between Cyril and the Orientals, with John the bishop of Antioch at their head. Notwithstanding all that was done against them, the Nestorians, aided mightily by Barsumas, created bishop of Nisibis, A. D. 435, spread their tenets, in this and the following century, through Egypt, Syria, Arabia, India, Tartary and China. A violent aversion to the Nestorian tenets led many into the opposite extreme. This was the case with the famous Eutychus, the founder of the Eutychians. Who about A. D. 448, was ordered to renounce his error, by the council assembled by Flavianus at Constantinople. He obstinately refused to comply with the decrees of the council, and appealed to a general council. In consequence of which, the Emperor Theodosius assembled an *œcumenical council* at Ephesus, A. D. 449, at the head of which he placed Dioscorus bishop of Alexandria, successor to Cyril, and a very faithful imitator of his pride, arrogance and fury, and a declared enemy to

*sacred* common right, men of noble minds, that dared to do it, have ever opposed and resisted their encroachments.

But, say some, who tremble for the ark of God, and, it is to be hoped, are more sincere than judicious, Must we not endeavour to exterminate *heresy*? Can we, with a good conscience, permit men to profess or preach *heresy*? And how shall we prevent the growth and prevalence of *heresy* any other-

---

the bishop of Constantinople. Accordingly matters were conducted in this, as they had been, in the former Ephesian council, when Cyril presided. The Greeks called this council a band, or assembly of robbers, *sunodon lestriken*, to signify that every thing was carried on by fraud or violence.—The face of affairs soon changed; and assumed an aspect utterly unfavourable to the party whom the Ephesian council had rendered triumphant. For upon the death of Theodosius, Marcian his successor complied with the demand of a general council, made by *Leo the Great* bishop of Rome. The council was assembled at Chalcedon, A. D. 451. The fourth oecumenical council. Dioscorus was condemned, deposed, and banished into Paphlagonia, the acts of the council of Ephesus were annulled, the epistle of Leo, received as a rule of faith; Eutychus, who had been already sent into banishment and deprived of his sacerdotal dignity by the emperor, was now condemned, though absent! The remedies however applied by this council, to heal the wounds of a torn and divided church, proved really worse than the disease. Troubles infinite immediately arose. To put an end to them, the Emperor Zeno, by the advice of Acacius, bishop of Constantinople, published, A. D. 482, the famous Henoticon, or decree of union, designed to reconcile the contending parties. This decree repeated and confirmed all that had been enacted in the councils of Nice, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, against the Arians, Nestorians, and Eutychians. There were bitter complaints against the Henoticon, as injurious to the honour and authority of the most holy council of Chalcedon. Hence arose new contests and new divisions, not less deplorable than those which the decree of the union was designed to suppress. It produced new and endless contests both among the Eutychians and the partisans of the council of Chalcedon. The doctrines of Pelagius were condemned in a council at Carthage, A. D. 412. This controversy was referred by Celestius and Pelagius to the decision of Zosimus the Roman Pontiff, who was raised to that see, A. D. 417. He decided in favour of the monks, and declared them sound in the faith. The African bishops, with Augustin at their head, persisted in their sentence. Zosimus yielded to the perseverance of the Africans, changed his mind, and condemned, with the utmost severity, Pelagius and Celestius, whom he had honoured with his approbation, and covered with his protection! The unhappy disputes about the opinions of Pelagius, occasioned, as usually happens, other controversies

wife, than by bringing opinions termed heretical, to some test or standard of orthodoxy ? †

For a reply to these questions, I will,

*First*, Enquire what *heresy* is ?

*Secondly*, What is the duty of Christians concerning it ?

One man is not to be called an *heretick*, purely because he differs from another, as to the articles of his faith. For then, either we

equally prejudicial to the peace of the church and the interests of true Christianity. — The sects of the Manicheans, Semi-Pelagians, Donatists, Arians, Nestorians, Eutychians, Monophysites, and these principal sects crumbled into various factions and divisions, remained in the 6th century.

A fifth oecumenical council was convoked at Constantinople, by the Emperor Justinian, A. D. 553. In this council the emperor gained his point, and had both the doctrines of Origen and the three chapters condemned. This council, instead of healing matters by their decrees, made them much worse, and gave rise to such divisions in the church, as could only be healed by length of time. Many separated themselves from the communion of the Pope, on this occasion, and carried their dissensions to a tedious and destructive length.

The ancient sects remained and were still in the church in the seventh century, and instead of being suppressed by the great number of councils of the three preceding centuries, they were really increased and prodigiously multiplied thereby.

Though the Greek church was already torn asunder by the most lamentable divisions, yet its calamities were far from being at an end. A new sect arose, 630, under the reign of Heraclius, which shortly excited such violent commotions, as engaged the eastern and western churches to unite their forces in order to its extinction. Heraclius having conversed with one Paul, a man of great credit and influence among the Armenian Monophysites, and with Athanasius the bishop of that sect ; issued an edict, A. D. 630, in favour of the doctrine of *one will*, and *one operation* in Christ. Cyrus, who had been promoted by the emperor to the see of Alexandria, assembled a council, and got the doctrines of Monothelitism, introduced by the emperor's edict, confirmed. This new modification of the doctrine of the council of Chalcedon, had the desired effect upon the Monothelites, and induced great numbers of them to return into the bosom of the church. Notwith-

standing

† “ There is no end (says an author) of imputation of heresy ; a charge always denied, and generally returned : To men of charity and sense the very sound is stale and foolish ; and is scarce any other than the language of craft and bigotry ; of knavery and folly.”

Some Remarks on Mr. President Clap's History and Vindication, &c. p. 41.



should all be *hereticks*, or there could be no *heresy* among us. If my neighbour is to be denominated an *heretick*, purely because he differs from me in his opinions about religious matters ; then am I also to be denominated an *heretick*, because I differ from him in my opinions about religious matters : For certainly I differ from my neighbour in my religious tenets, as much as my neighbour differs from me in his.

---

standing this promising appearance, there presently succeeded the most dreadful tumults. Sophronius a monk of Palestine, who was present at the council at Alexandria assembled by Cyrus, in 633, had violently opposed the decree of that council confirming the doctrine of *one will*. His opposition, though treated by the council with contempt, became formidable the following year. When raised to the patriarchal see of Jerusalem, he summoned a council in which the Monothelites were condemned as *hereticks*, who revived the Eutychian error. Sergius the patriarch of Constantinople informed Honorius, and determined that Pontiff in favour of Monothelism. Hence arose those obstinate contests which rent the church into two sects, and the state into two factions. To put an end to these factions and commotions, Heraclius issued out, in 639, the famous edict composed by Sergius, called the *ekthesis*, or exposition of the faith ; in which all controversies upon the question, *whether there was one or two operations in Christ*, were strictly prohibited. A number of the eastern bishops assented to this edict. In the west the case was quite different. John, the 4th Roman Pontiff of that name, assembled a council at Rome in 639, in which the *ekthesis* was rejected, and the Monothelites condemned. Nor was this all ; for in the progress of this contest, a new edict named *the type*, or *formulary*, was published in the year 648, by the emperor Constantine, by the advice of Paul of Constantinople ; by which the *ekthesis* was suppressed. But this did not give content. Martin, bishop of Rome, in a council assembled at Rome, A. D. 649, consisting of 105 bishops, condemned both the *ekthesis* and the *type* ; and thundered out the most dreadful anathemas against the Monothelites and their patrons, who were solemnly consigned to the devil and his angels ! The emperor Constantine highly incensed at these haughty proceedings of Martin, who treated the imperial laws with such contempt, ordered him to be seized and carried into the island of Naxos, where he was kept prisoner a whole year. And, for several years, this unhappy controversy seemed to be extinguished ; but it was a lurking flame, which spread secretly, and gave the more considerate reason to dread new combustions, both in church and state. To prevent these Constantine Pogonatus, the son of Constantine, pursuant to the advice of Agatho the Roman Pontiff, summoned the 6th general or œcumenical council, A. D. 680, in which he permitted the Monothelites and pope Honorius himself to be solemnly condemned in the pre-

Again, Men of different religions cannot be *hereticks* to one another. A *Turk* is not an *heretick* to a *Jew*; nor a *Jew* to a *Christian*; nor a *Roman catholick* to a *Protestant*, &c. for this plain reason, that the rule of their faith is not the same. The *al-coran*, the law of *Moses* with various traditions, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and numberless almost traditions of the Old and New Testament, only are the

---

sence of the Roman legates, who represented Agatho in that assembly, and confirmed the sentence pronounced by the council by the sanction of penal laws, enacted against such as pretended to oppose it. The Monothelites however continued in the church down to the 12th century. As the two last councils had decreed nothing concerning ecclesiastick discipline, nor religious ceremonies; to supply this defect, a new assembly of bishops was held pursuant to the order of Justinian II, in a spacious hall of the imperial palace, called *Trullus*, i. e. *capula*, from the form of the building. This council met, A. D. 692, and was called *Quinisextum*, being considered by the Greeks as a supplement to the 5th and 6th general or œcumenical councils.

Thus we have looked through the history of the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th centuries, and the seven œcumenical councils; all of which, except the last, were convened to *judge* of articles of faith, make creeds, form confessionals, determine the sense of scripture, require subscriptions, and terminate religious controversies. The consequences of all these *general councils*, and of every other council which met for the same purposes, for 400 years, were constantly and invariably the same, viz. the multiplication of errors, the introduction of tumults, strifes, divisions, wrath, emulations, schisms, convulsions, factions, and a long and nameless train of the most destructive evils and calamities to the Christian church. Not a single heretick was ever reclaimed, not an error suppressed, nor one good consequence ever produced, by any one, or by all these ecclesiastick councils during 400 years. And if we should trace down the history of the church to the present century, we shall find the same consequences always and invariably following all ecclesiastick councils, which have ever been holden, to *judge* of articles of faith, make creeds, or compare religious tenets with creeds already made, impose subscriptions, condemn errors, excommunicate or reclaim hereticks, &c. And, as human nature is the same in all ages, we have the greatest reason to expect the same consequences will follow all councils that shall ever, through divine sufferance, be convened for these purposes, so long as time shall endure. For it is contrary to reason, to the will of Heaven, to all the principles of human liberty and that right which the Deity himself hath granted to all mankind, to search, examine and judge for themselves in all matters of religion, that an ecclesiastick council should ever meet for such purposes as above. Indeed it is surprising and greatly astonishing, that any ecclesiastick council should be

various and differing rules of faith, of the *Turks, Jews, Roman catholicks* and *Protestants*.

These things being premised, *heresy*, among those *Christians* who acknowledge the word of God to be their *only* rule of faith, is, a separation made in a church on account of things not *expressly* contained in the word of God. And this separation may be made either by the major part of a church; or by an individual.\*

---

gully of such bold and daring presumption as to meet for the purposes of judging upon articles of faith, making creeds, imposing subscriptions, condemning whom they shall be pleased to call erroneous, *withdrawing communion*, &c. after more than 1400 years sad and awful experience of the odious, abominable, destructive and God-provoking consequences of such practices! It is impossible God should ever manifest his displeasure against any thing, if he hath not constantly done it against such conduct.

Though I am perfectly satisfied of the truth and justness of these observations, both as concerning the rights of ecclesiastick councils in matters of faith, and the consequences of their presuming to judge in these matters, yet I am willing it should be known that I am not alone in my judgment of these things. The sentiments of an ancient father Greg. Naxian. as I find him quoted by the Dissenting Gentleman, p. 141, 142, are, *Sic sentio, si verum scribendum est*, &c. My opinion is this, if I may be allowed to speak the truth; that all *conventions* of bishops are to be avoided: For I never saw any good come of any *synod*; nor that it did not much more mischief, than it hindered. For truth, in such assemblies, is generally borne down by a spirit of strife and vain glory. The Dissenting Gentleman himself observes, p. 258, 259. "Ecclesiastical *synods*, from the famous council of *Nice*, down to the non-famous *convocation* of L——n, anno 1717, sad experience hath shewn to have been little else than the pests and troublers of mankind; mints where pernicious errors have received the stamp of authority, and been sent out to corrupt the church, and to set the world in flames; and that, for the most part, they have been conventions of interested, ambitious, factious and angry men, who under a fair pretence of *zeal for the Lord of hosts*, have been driving furiously and faultily on in pursuit of worldly views; and with an affectation of being thought contending earnestly for the faith, have been only contending, like the disciples, who should be greatest among themselves." And, not to swell this note to too great a length, whoever will be at the pains of reading the following authors, will certainly find them speaking the same sentiments, viz. Dr. Lardner, Dr. Mosheim, Dr. Hare, Dr. Foster, Dr. Taylor, Dr. Whitby, Dr. Chandler, Dr. Wright, President Dickinson, Dr. Chauncey, Dr. Pemberton, Mr. Loke, Mr. Hart.

\* Letter concerning Toleration, p. 74, 75.



1. By the major part of a church. When the majority of a church withdraw communion from the minority, or from an individual; because the minority, or individual, will not subscribe to certain opinions and articles of faith, not expressly contained in the word of God.

2. When the minority, or any individual, will leave the communion of a church, and separate themselves from her, because she will not subscribe, as articles of her faith, certain tenets and doctrines, not expressly contained in the rule of faith they have adopted, the Holy Scriptures.

These two are *hereticks*. And thus a major, a minor part, or an individual may be hereticks. They may make a separation in a christian society, of the same religion, adopting the same rule of faith, by requiring subscription to certain tenets, points of doctrine, or articles of faith, not expressed in the adopted rule.

And this is both the grammatical meaning of the word *heresy*, and St. Paul's meaning of the word *heretick* in his letter to *Titus*, iii. 10. *Haireesis* and *haireetikos* both come from the verb *haireoo*, capio, eligo; which signifies to choose or elect: *Heresy* therefore grammatically signifies choice, election, sect; and a *heretick* is a sectary, or one who hath made a choice or election.\*

---

\* Though I am so happy as to agree with the learned critick, Mr. Poole, in my criticism upon these words *heresy* and *heretick*, yet I have the misfor-

St. Paul says of the *heretick*, "*he is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*" And what he here says of him is perfectly consistent with what hath been said above concerning an *heretick*. The Bible is the only rule of faith a Christian church hath adopted; an individual in that church, whether preacher or hearer, it matters not, hath formed certain opinions, not *expressly* contained in the Bible, and insists upon it that his brethren shall subscribe them. In so doing he subverts the foundation on which the church was built, he greatly sinneth and is condemned of himself; for he subscribed the Bible as the *only* rule of Christian faith, and now will substitute something else, as the rule of his faith, his own dogmas and opinions.

The learned and judicious critick, Mr. Poole, gives the same meaning to the words *heresy* and *heretick*, as is above given. Says he, "*Est ergo hic hereticus, is qui per opini-*

---

tune to disagree with a Rev. Member of the late confociational convention at *West-Stafford*; who not only condemned my exposition of *Titus*, iii. 10, but also my criticism upon the words *heresy* and *heretick*, and said, *the word heresy was derived of the Latin verb hæreo; and signified to stick on, or stick to; denoting that the heretick was one who pertinaciously held his opinions, and would not let them go!* This is the man who sets up for a judge of *heresy*, and presumes to censure and condemn, and excommunicate others for their religious tenets! Who is not even scholar enough to know, that the word *heresy* is of Greek and not of Latin derivation! This is the man who often declared in publick, that *HE* was Christ's Attorney, before the late Confociation, and not Attorney for the complainants!!! I should not have published this masterly criticism of these *modern times*, if its author had not repeatedly pronounced it in publick, in the face of Confociations; and a large assembly of spectators.

*onem, de ecclesia partus facit ; qui in id disputat ut sibi discipulos paret unitate contempta.*"  
Poli Synopsis in locum.

II. Let us enquire what is the duty of Christians concerning an heretick ? And when an *heretick* appears in the church, all Christians, who subscribe the Bible as their *only* rule of faith, are bound to avoid him, to turn away from him, and to refuse and forbid all free and familiar conversation and intercourse with him. They may and ought to treat him very much in the same manner they would treat an excommunicate. St. *Paul* does not say excommunicate, but reject him, *paraitou, pass by him, neglect him* ; for this good reason, that he hath excommunicated himself, by subverting the foundation of church communion and fellowship.

And this treatment of the *heretick* is agreeable to the sentiment of the learned critick before quoted. Says he, "*Non amplius admitte ad colloquium, sed aversare ; in externa ecclesiæ congregatione manere nec patere ; excommunicata dum resipiscat ; notam illi inure ut homini qui censuræ ecclesiæ subjacet, & jube omnes familiare ejus consortium fugere.*"

"*Non dicit, excommunicata ; nam ipsi ultra communionem deserunt.*" Poli Synopsis in locum.

Now we have a fair and ready reply to the questions before put. 1. Must we not



endeavour to exterminate heresy ? Reject, refuse it ? 2. Can we with a good conscience permit men to profess or preach heresy ? In a church that adopts the Bible as her *only* rule of faith, if a man either profess or preach that she ought to adopt something else ; for instance, several notions and tenets he has formed, in addition to the Bible, as her rule of faith ; the church must admonish him a first and second time ; if he still persist in professing or preaching his heresy, the church must refuse, reject and avoid him. 3. How shall we prevent the growth and prevalence of *heresy*, any otherwise than by bringing opinions, termed *heretical*, to some test or standard of orthodoxy ? St. Paul tells us, an *heretick* is “ *condemned of himself* :” If so, certainly there can be no necessity for bringing his opinions to any test or standard of orthodoxy.\*

---

\* Heresy does not consist in opinion or sentiment ; it is not an error of head but of the will. *Burkitt on Tit. iii, 10*, says, “ Learn hence, First, Who is an *heretick* in the Apostle’s sense, even he who is perverted from the true faith, and holds opinions which subvert the foundation of it ; and one who is condemned in his own conscience, and sine against his own *convictions* : For the Apostle here bids *Titus*, not to inform him of his errors, but admonish him of his *fault*, which shews, that the *crime lay not in his head, in his understanding*, but in his *will and affections* : For no man who acts according to his judgment and conscience, how erroneous soever, is *self-condemned* in that action.” *Henry on the place* says, “ *Knowing that he that is such is subverted, i. e. turned off from the foundation, and sinneth grievously being self-condemned*. Those that will not be reclaimed by admonitions, but are obstinate in their sins and errors, are *subverted and self-condemned* ; they inflict that punishment upon themselves, that the governors of the church should inflict upon them ; they throw themselves out of the church, and throw off its communion, and so are self-condemned.”

It is surprising any man should imagine *heresy* to be an error of judgment, when St. Paul says “ he is self-condemned ;” which could not possibly be

In a christian church which subscribes the Bible as her *only* rule of faith, no man can possibly be an *heretick* while he insists upon nothing else as the rule of faith, or necessary to church-communion, or essential to salvation : But whenever any man, in such a church, does insist upon subscription to any thing else but the Bible, as the rule of faith, or necessary to church-communion, or essential to salvation, he is an *heretick*, and must be treated as such.

But some *sincere conscientious people* may still ask, Is there not such a thing as false doctrine, short of *heresy*, which is not to be endured in our churches ? I am sensible a reply to this question will bring the *great and important business of ecclesiastick councils, conventions, and synods*, under consideration : But I am the rather willing to attempt a reply on that account.

And in order to a reply, let several things be premised,

1. A preacher of religion is the sole judge, for himself, with regard to the truth or falsehood of the doctrines he delivers. If it were otherwise, and a man were obliged to preach what other men judged to be truth, he must then be obliged to do the very thing for which our Saviour condemned the *Scribes*

---

the case on this supposition. Hence let a man's sentiments be what they may, if he believes them to be true, he is not an *heretick*, because not self-condemned.

and Pharisees, i. e. to teach for doctrines the commandments of men. Nor could he possibly comply with St. Paul's direction to the Christian preacher, "*Take heed unto thy doctrine.*" Unless it be said, that the Christian preacher is to take heed that his doctrine agree with human creeds and articles of faith !

2. The Bible contains *expressly* every thing necessary to Christian communion in this world, and eternal felicity and happiness in the world to come, 2 *Tim.* iii. 16, 17. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness : That the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

3. Each brother in the church, and every hearer of a preached gospel, are sole judges for themselves, with regard to the truth or falshood of what they hear ; its agreement or disagreement with the unerring standard the word of God. "*To the law and to the testimony : If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*" *Isa.* viii. 20, was the direction given to the Jewish church with regard to what they heard. "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God : Because many false prophets are gone out into the world,*" 1 *John* iv. 1, is the direction



given to the *Christian church* with regard to what they hear.

4. No man, or body of men, no ecclesiastick council, convention, or synod, of whatever name, have any right to judge for any Christian on earth, but themselves, whether preacher or hearer, what he shall preach or what he shall hear; whether what he preaches, or hears, be true or false, agreeable or repugnant to the Bible.\*

In proof of which I have already observed, that no ecclesiastick council of any denomination, that hath ever been in the Christian church, hath ever done any good, hath ever promoted truth, or suppressed error; but always the contrary; when ever they have undertaken to judge of doctrines for others, or

\* The author of the history of religion, introduces Dr. Foster, saying, "Religion therefore is only so far praise-worthy as it is the matter of our choice; and since religion is the means of procuring us acceptance with God, it necessarily follows, that every man has an undoubted right to judge for himself."

The author himself says, p. 96, "Every man must have a right to judge of the true meaning, and the obligation of those laws that come under his notice; and where the laws of an inferior clash with those of a superior, reason and consciousness will point out the proper deference to the laws of a superior. This alone justifies the separation from any establishment, and destroys the principle of force."

This author also cites bishop Hoadley, p. 96, 97. "Religious truths, says bishop Hoadley, is what concerns every one. Religion there can be none without enquiry; for what is contrary to the first notions of God, established upon the evidences of reason, cannot be admitted by any one who believes a God upon this evidence, because it destroys all those principles of reason itself. What is contrary to the plain design or declaration of the gospel, cannot be received by any one who believes the gospel, because it destroys the authority of the gospel in which he believes. And what is contrary to the fundamental principles of the reformation, without which it could never have been at first, and now cannot consistently be defended, will not, cannot be received by any true protestant, because it destroys his very title to that name, and is the very thing which, as a protestant, he receives."

to make creeds and formulas for the churches.

The truth of this proposition is also a natural and necessary inference from the three propositions just premised.

The New Testament every where supposes all men, both preachers and hearers, *sole* judges, for themselves, with regard to the truth and falshood of doctrines of religion, and their agreement and repugnancy to the unerring standard.

Now, to answer the question put, Whether there is not such a thing as falshood, or false doctrine, short of *heresy*, which is not to be endured in our churches?

I doubt not the possibility of a man's preaching false doctrines ; doctrines not contained either explicitly or implicitly in the Bible ; yea, it may be granted possible, perhaps, that a man may preach things contrary to what is thus contained in the Bible : Not contrary to what is *expressly* contained in the the Bible, but contrary to what may be therein implied. Now, if a man preach nothing contrary to any *express* proposition of the Bible, though he may often deliver things repugnant to what is implied therein ; yet, so long as his church, the people of his charge, are easy under his ministry, and do not discern the repugnancy of his doctrines to the Bible ; no man, or body of men, no ecclesiastick council, of whatever name, have

any divine right to disturb this worshipping assembly of Christians, by any of their notions, opinions or decrees whatsoever; for the reasons above given, viz. that the preacher hath a *sole* right of judging, for himself, with regard to the truth or falshood of his doctrines, and their agreement or disagreement with the unerring standard: And that his hearers have also a *sole* right of judging, for themselves, with regard to the truth or falshood of the doctrines they hear, and their agreement or disagreement with the unerring standard.

I have put the case now as favourably as possible on the side of those who hold the *popish tenet* above with reference to the authority of ecclesiastick councils. For it hath been generally the case, that a man charged with preaching false doctrine, and things disagreeing with the implications of the Bible; hath been *guilty* of delivering some things contrary to *long prescription*, and *boary creeds and confessionals*, made by men, and unjustly and injuriously imposed on mankind! And I greatly fear, yea, I know, if authentick history does not lie, that both preachers and professors of religion have oftner been persecuted, proscribed, imprisoned, deprived and slain, for preaching and professing doctrines and opinions contrary to *sacred creeds and confessions of faith*, and the *established religion*, than for contradicting any thing implied



in the Bible ! Witness the cruelties and horrid sufferings of that part of Christ's church which fled into the wilderness, and endeavoured to shelter themselves in the low countries and vales of *Piedmont*---of the *Wickliffites* in *England*---the *Protestants* in *Germany*---the *Non-conformists* and *Puritans*, our pious and illustrious ancestors, in *Great-Britain*, and numberless others, in all parts of *Europe*. Were these worthies always persecuted and tormented to death, because they departed from the *Bible-creed* in their preaching and professions ! Pride, ambition, lust of power, instigating men to practise upon that exploded *popish maxim*, were the formal cause of the sufferings and deaths of these faithful witnesses of *Jesus* ; who, long since, wear bright, glorious and unfading crowns, in the kingdom of *his* father and *their* father.

When the case is really such in any church or worshipping assembly of Christians, that they universally, or very generally, disapprove of, and are disgusted with, the doctrines and tenets of their preacher, as judging them inconsistent with reason, and repugnant to the word of God ; I know not of any power on earth that has a right to oblige that church, or worshipping assembly (after they have taken all reasonable pains rightly to inform their own judgments, like the noble *Bereans* of old, by searching the scriptures) still to live

under his administrations. But yet no ecclesiastick council hath any business here ; so far at least as the matter relates to opinions and doctrines preached and heard in this church. If an ecclesiastick council be called in by the church and people in this situation, *purely* to advise as to the expediency or inexpediency of dismissing the pastor ; I have not so much to object against it : Though I confess I know not that even this measure is warrantable, from any thing that is either expressed or implied in the New Testament.

Put the case, that a very few individuals in a church, or worshipping assembly of Christians, are dissatisfied with some particular tenets and doctrines of the preacher ; whilst however the pastor and nine tenths of the church and people are agreed and satisfied as to these tenets and doctrines. Neither the pastor, nor majority of the people, pretend to impose subscription to these obnoxious tenets, as they are called, on the minority, or any individual. Neither of these tenets is contrary to *express* scripture, nor *expressed* in the scripture, and therefore not essential to church-communion and salvation ; nor necessary to be believed by any Christian, nor denied. For every thing essential to church-communion and salvation is *expressed* in the Bible ; and every thing necessary to be denied and rejected by a Christian man is contrary to *ex-*

*press* scripture. This is evident upon the least reflection, for certainly a good and gracious God designs the present peace and future happiness of mankind : He would not therefore leave things so in his word, the only rule of the Christian's faith, as to endanger the present peace, much less the future happiness of mankind : But if every thing necessary to be received or rejected by the Christian man, were not *expressed* in the Bible, or plainly and indubitably contrary to *express* scripture ; both the present peace and future happiness of men would be endangered ; for scarce two men can be found who agree in their interpretations of implicit or doubtful scriptures, or in any articles or points of doctrine neither expressed in the Bible, nor indubitably contrary to what is there expressed : Therefore we may depend upon it, that the spirit of God hath *expressed*, and explained *expressly*, every necessary article of the Christian creed. Therefore the tenets and doctrines complained of, are not of the essentials of religion. However, representation is made to the Association of these obnoxious tenets ; the Association take pains to inform themselves in the matter, and advise to the convention of the Consociation to *bear* and *judge* on the premises. The preacher is desired and even *required* to appear before this venerable body of *clergymen* and *laies*, to



*answer to charges* exhibited against him, for *preaching* and *holding* such dangerous doctrines !

Now, Is not all this mighty stir perfectly right ? What will the poor criminal preacher do ? And what will this august assembly of divines and philosophers do ?

1. To the question, Is not all this stir perfectly right ? I reply, This convention of Consociation is, in my humble opinion, wrong, mistaken, unadvised, anti-scriptural, and oppressive.\*

---

\* This convention is to hear and judge upon articles of faith, and they have, according to the supposition above, *required* the accused to appear before them, to *answer to articles of charge*, concerning *doctrines* and *religious opinions*. Hence it is apparent this venerable body imagine they have some authority in these matters. And in truth they really have some authority, or they have abused two plain English words, *judge* and *require* ; both which words immediately convey to the minds of all, who hear or see them, whether they be simple or learned, the idea of authority. But if this body claim authority, they must necessarily claim *infallibility* ; because, if they are not endued with infallibility, they will lead those into error, most likely, on whom they impose their *authoritative judgment*. " This claim of authority," says the Dissenting Gentleman, " is an invasion of the divine prerogative, and in the language of the Holy Ghost, a sitting in the temple of God, shewing itself that it is God. It is a claim of *honour* as due to a company of poor, frail and fallible men, which belongs only to the omniscient and infallible God, and to Christ the sole lawgiver and king in the church. It is the very root of Antichristianism ; the prop upon which the whole system of popery rests ; it came from the church of Rome, and thither it directly leads." p. 232.

The celebrated Mr. Prior says of such boasted authority, " Oh ! the *tragedies* this usurped authority has acted in the world ! It was *authority* that put the Lord of life to death, and opposed the propagation of his gospel. It was *authority* that brought in *purgatory* and *transubstantiation*, with all the other absurdities of the church of Rome, and made them sacred from ridicule. It was *authority* that hid the purity of the gospel so long from our eyes, and delayed the reformation for ages before it happened. *Authority* has often *consecrated error* ; *nursed* ignorance, and *suppressed* truth. *Authority* has made knaves : *Authority* has made fools : But *mere authority* has seldom propagated virtue, or true religion. The *very claim* of this *authority* is a reproach to *Christianity* ; and an insult upon common sense."—" The author and finisher of our faith has given his ministers a commission to declare his will ; to administer his ordinances ; to receive those to communion,

In proof of the truth of this reply, I appeal to the wretched and destructive consequences of all such conventions which have ever been in the Christian church; to the sentiments of the purest and best part of the church of Christ, ever since he was on earth; to the sentiments of our worthy and illustrious ancestors, who fled from *oppression* and *ecclesiastick tyranny* in their native country, and first settled this land; and, what is more, I

whom the Scripture-canon receives; to exclude those, whom that excludes; to reprove them that will smile; to exhort to repentance, and to enforce their exhortations with the highest authority of Almighty God, the awful powers of another world, and all the engagements of *religion* here. Further degrees of church power I know not." *Charge*, p. 45, 46. Indeed the members themselves that compose our *modern* conventions ecclesiastick, afford an unanswerable argument, that such conventions have no authority to judge on *articles of faith*, to censure others, condemn and excommunicate, as they take upon them to do. For who can imagine, or dare affirm, that the Lord Jesus Christ has given commission to mere *men* in antiquity or divinity, to *mechanicks* and *husbandmen*, to judge on *articles of faith*, censure and condemn! &c. Dr. Hare observes with regard to this matter, "If indeed no one would judge in a cause he did not understand; if no one were allowed to understand a cause of *heresy*, but who was a good judge of the *sense of Scripture* and of *primitive antiquity*; if no one were esteemed to know *Scripture* and *antiquity*, but those who had studied them well, who had read them carefully with their own eyes, and did not take the *sense of them upon trust* from modern writers? If the arguments for his opinion were to be examined, before his opinion were condemned; if a man, before he gave his vote, were to lay his hand upon his heart, and declare himself thus qualified to judge; that he had considered the matter, and would speak nothing but what he thought! On these suppositions, I am apt to think, a number of judges would not very easily be found; and when they were, it may reasonably be presumed, that they would not be very apt to condemn. They would be sensible there was room for honest minds to be misled, from what they had read and observed themselves; they would know that there is more to be said on the other side, than the generality at all dream of; they would be careful how they discouraged learning, by discouraging the enquiries of learned men. They would be very unwilling a man should suffer by their sentence, whose life they are sure is innocent and virtuous, but whose opinions they cannot be so sure are false and dangerous. They know discouragement in learning and virtue to be of such ill consequences, that a man's opinions must be very bad indeed, to make it necessary to come to such extremities. But give me leave to say, you have no reason to expect such judges, or such backwardness to judge. It is always supposed, that the doctrine of

appeal to the New Testament. And in vindication of this reply I stand solemnly bound, in point of honour, to appear : For I am not a son of the " bond woman, but of the free."

2. As to the second question, What will the poor criminal preacher do ? I cannot certainly determine what he will do, though I am satisfied what I should do in a like situation. I should certainly deny the *jurisdiction* of

---

the church you are of, is right ; that it is the doctrine of scripture and antiquity. And this, every body thinks, he understands. So that little learning or reading is necessary, to make any clergyman a judge over the learnedest man alive." Dr. Hare's letter to a young clergyman, p. 30, 31. Is it to be presumed that our modern Consociations are always composed of men thus qualified to judge ? By the ecclesiastick constitution of Connecticut, not only laymen, but any men, whom the churches shall choose, may attend their pastors, and sit in judgment on matters of the greatest consequence ; which require the greatest abilities, both natural and acquired ; the soundest judgment ; the greatest candor and moderation, together with the warmest attachment to religion and the real interests of mankind ! Is it a breach of charity to suppose, that, if Dr. Hare's qualifications were to be required in each member of our Consociations, before they should be admitted to judge, that five tenths of their number would be generally excluded ? I presume that if these qualifications were to be read at the opening of the sessions, and those only were to stay behind as judges, who were thus qualified, the number of judges would be extremely small. Yet, according to present measures, all who come are admitted to judge, without exception ! Must we be borne in hand that this is a divine constitution ! did it descend from Heaven, and proceed from a God of infinite wisdom and unbounded goodness ! has it met with the approbation of that immortal lover of man, Jesus our dear and blessed Redeemer, who, to plant religion in our dark benighted world, clothed himself in humanity, lived, preached, suffered, bled and died amongst men ! I cannot, I may not, believe it ! It is blasphemy to say it ! It is certainly evil-speaking both of the wisdom and goodness of the king and head of the church ! If I must submit to ecclesiastick authority, and my religious creed must be dictated by men, I will certainly, following the example of the renowned Chillingworth, go to Rome, where dwell those who have a much fairer claim to infallibility, than any in our church. My reason and conscience, and the duty, and allegiance I owe to the God of nature and grace, my heavenly patron and my judge, will never permit me to stand at an human tribunal, and submit the articles of my faith to poor, weak, frail, fallible men ! Nor can I, whilst I retain my reason, and those ideas of the divine Majesty I now have, be induced to believe, that He ever hath required me so to do, or that He would not be greatly displeased with me, if I should do it.



the Consociation, and insist, that they shewed their warrant for sitting, from reason and the sacred oracles : And, until this was done to my own, and the reasonable satisfaction of the impartial world, I should decline to answer a single question concerning the doctrines impeached.

3. For the third question, What will this august assembly of divines and philosophers do ? The following things may be received in reply.\* Since they have met together in this *solemn manner*, they will doubtless advise the complainants, that, as the doctrines in dispute are neither *expressed* in the Bible, nor indubitably contrary to any thing therein *expressly* contained ; having been constantly disputed in the Christian church, for upwards of 1500 years ; as they have been constantly held and denied by different divines, purely on account of their different interpretation of

---

\* The author of Remarks upon President Clap's History, &c. says, concerning such ecclesiastick conventions, " But would men be tried, judged and excommunicated by such a standard as this ? No ! not so long as they had one atom of *common sense* left. These things will never go down in a free State, where people are bred in, and breathe a free air, and are formed upon principles of liberty ; they might answer in a popish country, or in Turkey, where the common people are sunk and degraded almost to the state of brutes, by poverty, chains and absolute tyranny, and have no more sense of liberty and property, than so many *jack asses* : But in a free state they will be eternally ridiculed and abhorred. For my part, did I not think religion far too sacred to be trifled with, and was I persuaded that no ill consequences would attend such a *venerable council*, I should be half pleased to see it ; as it would be a droll subject, a subject of lampoon and buffoonry, to see the *Bishop of Connecticut* awfully attended with an equipage of 15 or 16 in *black*, touring through the Government, to excommunicate this, that, and the other church from the faith, *et cetera*." p. 109, 110. It is not great pity that this good gentleman had not been at *West-Stafford*, 2d of November, 1779, to see his droll subject !

implicit or doubtful scriptures : And, as neither the pastor nor church do pretend to require subscription to them of any individual in said church, or in the world ; but leave all men to search the scriptures and judge for themselves, concerning the truth or falshood of the doctrines, and consequently to receive or reject them, as they shall finally determine : I say, they will doubtless, in consequence of these considerations, advise the complainants, that they carefully and prayerfully search the rule of their faith, the Bible, endeavouring to form their religious tenets and articles of faith upon the *expressions* of scripture ; leaving their minister and the church to which they belong, to enjoy their own opinions relative to the interpretation of *implicit* or *doubtful* scriptures : And, that they, by no means, attempt to make a schism in the church on account of opinions not *expressly* in, nor *expressly* contrary to, the only rule of faith adopted in their church ; lest they commence *hereticks* and be treated as such. *Heresy* being, as before explained, the making a separation in Christian communion, on account of opinions not *expressly* in the rule of faith, nor contrary to any thing *expressly* contained in it.

A short animadversion on the citation shall finish my present design. " The Association, " having taken opportunity for enquiry and

“ information in the case, have advised that  
 “ it is *highly expedient* that the *Consociation*  
 “ of this district be convened *as soon as may*  
 “ *be with conveniency*, TO HEAR AND  
 “ JUDGE ON THE PREMISES.

“ This is therefore to desire and REQUIRE  
 “ you to APPEAR before said CONSOCI-  
 “ ATION, &c. *to answer to the CHARGES*  
 “ contained in the paper beforementioned.”

We need look no further back into eccle-  
 siastick history than the reign of *Queen Mary*  
 of *England*, of *glorious memory* ! to find great  
 numbers of *citations* which run in the same  
 language, sent to the laborious and painful  
 servants of *Jesus Christ*, to call them into  
 the *high-commission court*, to answer to *charges*  
 of *heresy*. “ *Surely oppression maketh a wise*  
*man mad,*” says *Solemon*.

I plainly discern *charges of heresy, citations,*  
*trials, censures, imprisonments*, if the civil go-  
 vernment would permit, *deprivations*, ga-  
 thering thick around such *courteous papers* as  
 that under consideration. I mean that the  
 spirit of the paper, not the Gentlemen who  
 composed it, gives me these ideas. O ! this  
 odious business of *creed-making* and sub-  
 scription ! it hath shed more human blood  
 than all the civil wars since *Christ* !

Be pleased to look yonder, and behold  
 your neighbours, your dearest friends, your  
 sons and brothers, braving every danger,



struggling with countless hardships, difficulties and deaths, in order to ease off from *you* and *their dear country*, the intolerable weight of oppression and civil tyranny ! whilst you at home, in *your easy chairs*, are, in my humble opinion, fast riveting the more galling and intolerable chains of *ecclesiastick tyranny*, on their necks, and the necks of their children and their children's children !

As to the second name to this paper, *Charles Backus*, his youth, inexperience\* and want of sufficient reading and discernment, might possibly plead a little in his favour, and mitigate somewhat the severity of censure. But my tongue cannot express the amazement of my mind, upon sight of the name, *Theodore Hinsdale*, set to such an unchristian paper ! A man of upwards of 40 years, of maturity of judgment, reading and discernment ! What will not *hoary prescription* do, when men do not sufficiently examine for themselves !

These, Gentlemen, are the reasons of my protestation against the present procedure of Confociation in the second society in *Stafford*, Nov. 2, 1779.

DAN FOSTER.

---

\* This was the first Confociation Mr. *Backus* ever was a member of ; and yet must require a Father in the ministry, of upwards of 50 years, to appear before him, to answer to charges, &c. Is this a constitution of *Heaven* that admits of such absurdities ! I will as soon believe all the *reveries* of the *Romish church* to be divine !

### III. STRICTURES on the REPORT of a certain anonymous COMMITTEE.

**A**LTHOUGH I repeatedly requested a copy of the result of Confociation at *West-Stafford*, before they left the ground, and was as often promised one as soon as it could be prepared ; yet after waiting about a month, and when I had almost concluded the Gentlemen had forgot their promise, or made it with some mental reservation, I received, very much worn and defaced, a *Manuscript*, indorsed on the back in the following words, “ *A copy of the Result of Confociation at West-Stafford, Nov. 2, 1779.*” I unfolded it, and found it attested by *Theodore Hinsdale*, and *Aaron Church*, Scribes ; Scribes of what I could no determine, unless of the *Committee*. I then looked for the beginning, and found none, or rather that it began in the middle.---I then looked for its regular form and found it had none ; I then began in the middle and read it through, and void and darkness was on the face of it throughout, like the original chaos represented *Gen. i.* I then looked to see who were of the *Confociation*, at what time, and in what place they held their session, and found no place, time nor person ; I then looked to see who was the *Complainant*, what the *complaint*, who the *Defendant* and

where residing, in fine who the *parties* were that appeared to implead each other, and found no *body* and *nothing*. I am obliged therefore to call it the copy of a Result or Report of a certain *anonymous Committee*, attested, as such by the two men before named, and must still wait that their promise of a copy be accomplished, while I repeat my request of a true, full, and properly attested copy, not of the Report of a nameless *Committee*, but of *Consociation*, that identical *Consociation* that set in judgment upon my creed last fall, at *West-Stafford*.

The following is the Report of this anonymous Committee.

" *Thursday*, 8 o'clock, Met according to adjournment. The Committee last chosen made their report, which was accepted, and is as follows,

" ART. I. That Children are not born with sinful and vicious natures, and that *Adam's* sin and guilt is not imputed or conveyed to his posterity, but Children are born in the image of God, objects of his favour and without desert of punishment. This article owned and defended by Mr. *Foster*. Voted dangerous and contrary to gospel, according to charge. The *Consociation* disapprove of it for the following reason. The word of God is full and express in asserting that men are born into the world with corrupt and de-



praved natures, Gen. vi. 5, speaking of the wickedness of man, it is said, *the imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one," Job xiv. 4, and John iii. 6. "That which is born of the Flesh is Flesh," Eph. ii. 3. "and were by nature children of wrath, even as others." And that man derives a corrupt nature from Adam is abundantly plain from Gen. v. 3. And Adam begat a son in his own likeness after his image, not after the image of God, in which we read man was first made, Gen. i. 27, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him;" but in his own fallen likeness. Psalm li. 5, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Rom. v. 12, and on, "therefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned." And 18, "therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." And 19. "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." If children are not polluted, why then are they baptized? Why necessary to be regenerated for the enjoyment of God? Thus evident it is to every candid and impartial mind that man is born into the world with a sinful nature, not in the moral image of God, consequently not free from guilt or desert of punishment.

ART. II. That perfect obedience is not required of us, but the law that required it of us is entirely abolished. Not proved.

ART. III. That obedience is the only condition in the covenant of grace. Owned and defended by Mr. *Foster*, and as explained in his defence and printed works, was by the council voted dangerous. *Rom. iv. 5, 6.* "*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*"--"*Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.*" In these words the blessings of the covenant of grace are expressly suspended on faith, but they could not be if obedience in distinction from faith were the only condition. It is certain without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and the gospel contains the most weighty arguments to universal obedience : But this obedience is the fruit of an union with Christ, and it can no more exist without this union than a branch severed from the vine can bear fruit. *Rom. iv. 5. and xi. 6.*

ART. IV. That we have a natural and moral power to do all that the gospel requireth of us. Owned and defended. Voted unscriptural and dangerous according to charge. Mr. *Foster* wholly explodes the distinction between natural and moral power as foolish and ridiculous, and in his defence asserts that

we have all power necessary to do what the gospel requires of us in order to inherit its blessings. That God doth not require natural impossibilities of men we are as full in asserting as he can be, but at the same time, must believe that man's inability to holiness is such as fully to justify those words of our saviour, *John*, vi. 44. "*No man can come unto me except the father which hath sent me draw him.*" And of the Apostle, *Rom.* viii. 7. "*The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*"---Should we admit that man hath full power to do all the Gospel requires of him, in every sense in which he may be said to possess it, we conceive we must then admit a principle of holiness in him naturally, in his fallen state, contrary to the word of God, or else utterly deny the force of moral obligation---For to adopt the rule of duty to the bias of the depraved heart, is to make it what we please, and it is entirely repugnant to all our notions of the perfections of the deity, that he should give his rational creatures such mutable variable laws, for his laws are all like himself holy, just, and good immutably.

ART. V. That our good works are the matter of our justification at the Redeemer's bar. Owned and defended. Voted unscriptural and dangerous. This article, *Mr. Foster* professes openly to defend, but to us it



appears directly opposite to, and subversive of the gospel method of salvation. No doctrine is more plainly and frequently taught, as a foundation principle in the holy scripture, than that the believer's justification before God, is wholly on account of Christ's righteousness. *Rom. iii. 28.* A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,---and 20 "*By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.*" *Titus iii. 7:* "*That being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*" *Rom. v. 19.* "*So by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*" Can any thing be more evident from these and similar texts than that the matter of our justification before God, is not our own personal defective obedience, but the all-perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone. This righteousness of Christ is the sole and exclusive ground of our pardon and acceptance with God, and justification at the Redeemer's bar, *Rom. x. 4.* "*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*"---Saints in glory are described as having their robes made white in the blood of the lamb. *Rev. vii. 14.* "*These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.* If our works are the matter of our justification at the re-

deemer's bar, it is difficult to say for what purpose Christ died, or how he is mediator between God and man.

ART. VI. That Christ's righteousness is not sufficient for our acceptance with God, that being a legal righteousness, but we must have a gospel righteousness for which we shall be accepted. Voted, proved according to charge. For the reasons we refer to the texts cited under the preceeding article.

ART. VII. That the doctrine of particular and personal election is not known in the word of God. Proved according to charge. It is proved in the opinion of the Confociation that Mr. *Foster* explodes the idea of personal election, particularly in a sermon delivered at the ordination of his son *Daniel*, pages p. 50 and 51. This doctrine is plainly and fully taught in divine Revelation: *Eph. i. 11.* "*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*" And 4, 5. *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.* *Rom. viii. 29.* *Whom he did predestinate---moreover, whom he did predestinate, &c. &c.*

ART. VIII. That Christ died for the whole world in this sense, that one as much

as another is alike given to Christ. This Article is proved according to charge in the judgment of this Council, in the sermon Mr. *Foster* preached at Mr. *Joel Foster's* ordination.---This Consociation doubt not of the sufficiency of the merits of the saviour for the whole world : But it will not hence follow that Christ died for all intentionally alike, or that one as much as another is given to Christ. *John xvii. 9. I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine---and 20, Neither pray I for these alone but for them also who shall believe on me, through their word. John vi. 37. All that the father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.* If Christ died for all, as much for one as another, then if all do not actually participate of the benefits of his death, and at last arrive to Heaven, his purpose and intention must be frustrated.

ART. IX. That the righteous man who is pardoned and justified and has the promise of life, may fall from his righteousness and finally perish. Not sufficiently proved.

ART. X. That the Bible is badly translated, much of it, and in one place an error in the original.

As to this article, the Consociation are of opinion that Mr. *Foster* only meant that there were errors in some Hebrew copies.



Therefore we think ourselves holden in faithfulness on this occasion, to bear our open testimony against the abovementioned doctrines held and taught by Mr. *Foster*, as being not only contrary to the gospel, and of dangerous tendency, but some of them, at least, even subversive of the Christian institution, and to say that we cannot but look upon these errors persisted in, as utterly disqualifying for the gospel ministry, and therefore that we cannot in conscience hold communion with the pastor who persisteth in them.

A true Copy,                      Attest,  
 THEODORE HINSDALE, } Scribes.  
 AARON CHURCH,

As the reader has the report before him, I think it needless to repeat the articles in the following strictures.

ART. I. &c.---Voted dangerous and contrary to gospel, according to charge, and disapproved for the following reason : ' The word of God, say they, is full and express in asserting that men are born into the world with corrupt and depraved natures.'---Very confidently said, but where are these *full* and *express* scriptures to be found in the word of God ? Why, *Gen. vi. 5*, is one ; speaking of the wickedness of man, it is said, *the imagination of the thoughts of his heart are only evil*

*continually.* --- But what would they infer from these words ? Was the wickedness of the antediluvian world referred to in *Gen. vi. 5*, their natural corruption and depravity ? If it was then this natural corruption is not universal, since *Noah* must be excepted who was a just man, perfect in his generations and walked with God, see the 9th verse : Or was this wickedness an evidence of their natural corruption ? If so, then by parity of reason *Adam* himself was naturally, or as he came into existence, corrupt, for he eat the forbidden fruit ; and the angels, at least many of them, were created vicious beings, for they revolted from the *Almighty* : Or, does the evidence of the natural corruption of the human race depend upon the universality of the corruption and depravity of mankind referred to ? Then certainly *Adam* and *Eve* were naturally depraved ; for, when they only were existent, mankind were surely universally depraved and that without any exception ; whereas there was one man righteous in the age referred to. Hence it is very apparent that the corruption of mankind in the age referred to, was neither *natural* corruption *itself*, nor an *evidence* of it. It is the unhappiness of some Gentlemen, that they ascribe to human nature simply as existing, what belongs to it only as men have corrupted it by a long course of continued impiety : Thus they make all men

children of wrath by nature, from the Apostle's words to the *Ephesians*, ii. 2, 3. which evidently relate to their former state of Heathenism, when they lived in gross idolatry and under the government of the prince of darkness, as the context plainly shows. Is it a just and conclusive method of reasoning, to argue from the state of human nature, when corrupted by actual sins and rebellions, to its state and condition as it comes into existence? Because human nature is capable of being viciated, and is in fact viciated, by personal wickedness, therefore it is vicious as it proceeds from the finishing hands of its maker? Because the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of a moral wicked agent are evil, therefore the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of one who is not a moral agent, *viz.* an infant, are evil? Because the scriptures inform of a man, or number of men, who by a continued course of wickedness, had contracted fixed habits of villainy to that degree that all their thoughts and imaginations were evil, shall we take this to be a *full* and *express* scripture assertion that men are born into the world vicious and depraved? If a man in a long course of open impiety, is finally left of God to commit murder, and dies on a gibbet, is this an indubitable evidence that he was born into the world a wicked wretch, with a murderous disposition? It seems so, or *Gen.*



vi. 5. would never have been cited in proof of the state of mankind by nature, or as they came into the world. If such reasoning is not to be allowed, then the text cited is not to the purpose.

The next scripture cited by the committee as *expressly* asserting that man is born into the world with a corrupt and vicious nature, is *Job* xiv. 4. ' *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? not one.*' Let the reader only turn his attention to the preceeding verses of the chapter, and he will find that the cleanness and uncleanness referred to in the words as they stand connected with the context, have no reference at all to moral evil, but only and simply to the shortness, vanity and afflictions of the present life---that we are liable to many evils in the present state ; our days are few and troublesome, we are cut down like a flower, and flee as a shadow. As parents are frail and mortal, so they propagate a frail and mortal nature, for nothing can be more perfect than its original : This is *Job's* reasoning, and the evident design of the words : How then is native corruption and viciousness expressly asserted in these words, when they have no manner of relation to any such thing.

The next *full* and *express* scripture for natural depravity used by the Committee, is *John* iii. 6. ' *That which is born of the Flesh*

*is Flesh.* i. e. that which is born in the sense you *Nicodemus* speak of, is but a mere man constituted of body and soul, or the mere constitution and powers of a man in their natural state, and so not fit for the vision of God because not holy; therefore our saviour informs him that a different birth was necessary in order to qualify for the kingdom of God, viz. a spiritual one: But not a word is there here about original depravity, or that we are born vicious.

Another *express* scripture is *Eph. ii. 3.* which we have mentioned already to have reference to a state of heathenism, and needs nothing further said upon it.

The committee proceed--“ That man derives a corrupt nature from *Adam* is abundantly plain from *Gen. v. 3.* And *Adam* begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; not after the image of God, in which we read man was first made, *Gen. i. 27,* ‘ *God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him,*’ but in his corrupted fallen likeness.” Powerful reasoning! *Adam* begat a son in his likeness, and what would they infer from this? So the inferior orders of creatures, according to a divine establishment, beget their young in their likeness: Is this an evidence of natural viciousness? No more, I fancy, is intended by the words, than that *Adam*, as a worker,

together with God, begat an human reasonable creature, and therefore in his likeness; *i. e.* he begat a man like himself, having the same nature that God had given him. That it has no reference to the qualities and propensities of *Adam's* mind, or his son's, is evident; unless minds are propagated as bodies are, by natural generation, and *Adam* was the father of *Seth's* spirit, as he was of his flesh: And if this be the case, I see not why one moral quality may not be propagated as well as another; holiness as well as sin, virtue as well as vice; for viciousness is no more of the essence of the mind than virtue. If then minds are propagated in the same manner as bodies are, the qualities of these minds are in like manner propagated, for they are not to be separated in any given instance; by consequence an holy mind will propagate an holy mind, and *vice versa*: In the same manner that a vicious moral quality may be propagated, in the same manner a virtuous moral quality may be propagated. If this reasoning be not good, let the fallacy be shewn. But the truth is, moral viciousness has its seat in the mind, and the Almighty is the direct and immediate author of the human mind, and therefore stiled in the scriptures the father of our spirits, *Heb. xii. 9.\**

\* That God is the direct and immediate author of the human mind is a proposition I shall at present take for granted; when the truth of it is called in question and disputed, I stand ready to prove it.



and said to form the spirit of man within him, *Zech. xii. 1.* Hence if *Adam's* son had any vicious qualities in his mind connate with the existence of it, God placed them there, from whom his mind immediately derived, which makes the pure and holy God the author and prime source of all the wickedness that ever existed among the human race: But, '*are not my ways equal?*' saith the Almighty. May he defend us from such a blasphemous imputation!—I would here just observe that the word *own*, which the Committee appear to place the stress of their reasoning from *Gen. v. 3.* upon, is not in the original, but supplied by the translators, and the text ought to be read thus—'*And Adam begat in his likeness, in his image:*' To make it therefore an emphatical word is quite unjustifiable.

From what has already been observed, is not this consequence unavoidable, *viz.* that mankind are not corrupt and vicious as they come into the world? It is capable, I think of demonstration that whatever viciousness there is in the human mind, as it comes into existence, must proceed from God equally with the mind itself. Does it not appear vain then for any man to reason from those words *Gen. v. 3.* to prove derived viciousness, when agreeable to such reasoning this viciousness must derive immediately from the

deity ? Further, are these Gentlemen of the Committee absolutely certain that *Adam*, when he begat *Seth*, was not a convert, a truly religious and holy man ? He was now 130 years old, and had lived nearly as long under the gospel dispensation ; if he ever embraced the gospel and became a virtuous man, as has been always believed in the church, it is in the highest degree probable he was now a virtuous and godly man. And if moral pravity may be propagated by natural generation, as the Committee suppose, why not moral virtue also ? And if moral virtue may be thus propagated, why is it not quite as likely *Seth* was born virtuous as vicious ? I think it lies upon the Committee to make it evident that virtue cannot be propagated as well as depravity ; or that *Adam*, when he begat *Seth*, was not a virtuous man. Until then I must look upon the argument from this text, in favour of the natural viciousness of mankind, as absolutely inconclusive and prodigiously uncharitable.

If the Gentlemen I oppose will avow the opinion, that minds are capable of division and multiplication, and therefore, like the animal part, are propagated by natural generation, they might give a better account of their derived viciousness ; although in this case to impute guilt to the posterity of *Adam*, and punish them on account of this derived vicious-

ness would be unjust and unequal, since it was by virtue of no act or choice of theirs--to which they had never given their assent or consent.

The next scripture they have been fit to produce as *express* proof of our being born vicious, is *Psalms* li. 5. '*I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*' The words, agreeable to the *Hebrew*, ought to be rendered—'*I was born in iniquity, and in sin did my mother nurse, or nourish me;*' which words have no reference, I conceive, to his simple formation in his mother's womb, but import no more than that he was a great sinner, early went astray, and had contracted strong habits of vice. *Job* speaks of guiding the widow from his mother's womb, *Job* xxxi. 18. The wicked are said to go astray from the womb, as soon as born, speaking lies, *Psalms* lviii. 3, and the house of *Jacob* is called a transgressor from the womb, *Isaiah* xlvi. 8. These scriptures are of like import with the words of the *Psalmist* under consideration, and intend no more than that they did these things very early, as soon as capable; not that *Job* guided the widow, the wicked went astray, and the Jews transgressed as soon as born, even in an infant state, for this was utterly impossible. If we take the words in the literal sense of our translation, it is manifest *David* chargeth his sin and wickedness,



not upon himself, but upon some other person ; for, it will be granted on all hands, he did not shape and conceive himself : Who then shaped him ? Answer, God, *Psalm cxix. 73*, and *Job xxxi. 15*. *That God-made us*, is an unanswerable reply to all reasonings from such scriptures as these, or any other, to prove natural viciousness, and is an incontestable evidence that they are grossly misunderstood and abused, while strained to patronize such a *blasphemous sentiment*.

The next scriptures advanced as being *express* in the case of derived viciousness, are “ *Rom. v. 12. Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned---* and 18, *therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation---* and 19, *by one man's disobedience many were made sinners.*” The Committee mean to prove from *Rom. v. 12*, that man derives a corrupt nature from *Adam*, *i. e.* a nature morally corrupt, or vicious---“ *Wherefore by one man, sin entered into the world :*” Here the Apostle affirms that sin entered into the world by *one man*, *i. e.* *Adam*. “ *And death by sin.*” What sin ? Whose sin ? Evidently *Adam's* sin, his *one* sin of eating the forbidden fruit. “ *And so death passed upon all men.*” That is, by the *one* sin of the *one* man *Adam*, the whole human race became mortal. “ *For that all*

*have sinned.* How is this ? Does the Apostle here affirm, that *all* men have sinned, contradistinguishing sin from suffering ? This would be to contradict himself in the same verse. He had just affirmed, that *one* man sinned; and that death came upon all for, or in consequence, of that *one* sin : Now to make him affirm in the last clause, that *all* have sinned, would make him palpably contradict himself. Further, it would not then be by *one* sin ' that death hath passed upon all men; ' but by *many* sins, even the sins of all men, directly repugnant to the express words of the inspired writer. That mortality came into the world, and passed upon all men, by *Adam's one* sin, is proved from the text : But that mankind derive a corrupt nature from *Adam* is not *expressed* in the text most certainly ; nor can it be inferred from any expression in the text, with the least shadow of probability, except the last clause : And that the Apostle doth not mean to be literally understood in this clause, is undeniably evident, unless he contradicts himself, which we may not suppose. He evidently means *suffering* by the word *sin*, *suffered* by *sinned*, as is very usual in the sacred writings. Further that St. *Paul* does not mean to affirm that all mankind sinned in *Adam*, is evident from this, that he affirms all are liable to death, on account of *Adam's* sin, which

he would not have done, had he meant that all mankind had sinned, and so became liable to death on account of their own sin ; which they would have been, had they all sinned in *Adam*.

As to verses, 18th and 19th, cited by the Committee, I shall observe nothing upon them, the above being a full reply to any thing they can gather from those verses to prove what they undertook to establish from *express scripture*, viz. that man derives a corrupt nature from *Adam* ;\* but would here express my astonishment that any man, or number of men, unless professed Deists and Infidels, should thus abuse scripture, by a designed partial citation of it, as the Committee has done ; I say designed, for I cannot but suppose they were conscious, that a fair and full citation of the 18th and 19th

---

\* The twelfth verse of *Rom. V.* may be considered as a comment, or exposition upon *1 Cor. xv. 22*, as the Apostle is treating of the same matter though more at large. As in '*Adam all die*,' cannot be taken literally, but thus, as in *Adam all became mortal*.—"Why St. Paul differs in his phrase here from what he used to the *Corinthians*, and prefers here that which is harder and more figurative, may, perhaps, be easily accounted for, if we consider his stile and usual way of writing, wherein is shewn a great liking of the beauty and force of Antithesis, as serving much to illustration and impression. In the 15th chapter of *Corinthians*, he is speaking of life restored by Jesus Christ, and to illustrate and fix that in their minds, the death of mankind best served : Here to the *Romans* he is discoursing of righteousness restored to men by Jesus Christ, and therefore here the term *sin* is the most natural and properest to set that off. But that neither actual or imputed sin is here meant, or v. 19, where the same way of expression is used, he that has need of it may see proved in Dr. *Whitby*, upon the place. If there can be any need of any other proof, when it is evidently contrary to St. Paul's design here, which is to shew, that all men, from *Adam* to *Moses*, died solely in consequence of *Adam's* transgression, see verse 17."—*Locke*.—See also Dr. *Whitby*, Dr. *Taylor*, and Dr. *Chauncy* on the place.



verses of *Rom. v*, would have made it appear to any one of common understanding who should read their report, that these scriptures were not to their purpose. I must entreat them for the future to pay a little more respect to inspiration, than to abuse it in this manner, lest they fall under the heavy charge of handling the word of God *deceitfully*.

The Committee then proceed to propound two questions, viz.

I. If children are not polluted why then are they baptized?

*Answer.* Baptism is a seal of the covenant, the badge of Christ's disciples; and infants are baptized, to distinguish them from the world as such, by divine order: And not to wash away original sin as the Papists dream.

II. Why necessary that infants be regenerated for the enjoyment of God?

*Answer.* Because infants are not personally and inwardly holy as they come into being, though many of them are federally so, and therefore not fit for the enjoyment of God, or the kingdom of glory; for without holiness no one shall see the Lord.

Thus after misinterpreting and misapplying the above scriptures, and propounding two questions; as if conscious of victory and that truth was with them, they close their observations upon this first article in the following words-----"Thus EVIDENT it

is\* to every candid and impartial mind, that man is born into the world with a sinful nature, not in the moral image of God, consequently not free from guilt or desert of punishment" !!!—But where is the evidence of these conclusions ? Where the premises from

---

\* What is evident ? *It is evident to any candid and impartial mind, that this nameless Committee, whoever they be, have espoused a system of religious notions, which they mean to use as an infallible standard and test of orthodoxy : And that though this favourite system cannot be proved, nor defended by scripture, it being neither expressed or implied therein, yet all those who take the liberty to dissent from it, as all must who search and examine the scriptures for themselves, must be said to want candour and impartiality. Again, it is evident, this Committee have some new meaning to the phrase express scriptures, or else that this assertion of theirs, " that mankind are born into the world with a corrupt and vicious nature," is not proved by express scripture. For certainly this proposition is no where to be found in the Bible, lying in these words : If the Committee therefore mean by express scripture such as express a proposition in which it is affirmed, as mankind generally do, then there is no express scripture for the proposition above ; and they who affirm there is, must acknowledge themselves to be greatly mistaken in so doing. If they mean by express scriptures, such texts as are to be found written in the Bible, whether they have any reference or not to the matter to be proved by them, it may be confessed their proposition is proveable from express scripture ; for there are a great number of texts written in the Bible, that have no manner of reference to such a proposition ; though but very few that have less reference to it, than those cited by the Committee, as express scriptures in proof of it. If they mean by express scriptures, that the words of a proposition proved as theirs is, by express scriptures, may be all found, lying in different parts of the Bible, and so must be picked by partial citations, and brought together, in order to form the proposition ; I acknowledge this proposition may be proved by express scripture ; for all the words of the proposition above are undoubtedly to be found somewhere in the Bible. And one would think the last is the meaning the Committee put to the words express scripture, because they have made attempts to prove their proposition by partial citations from the scriptures. Again, it is evident, the Committee found themselves destitute of scripture evidence in support of the Calvinistick, and therefore orthodox notion, that man is born into the world with a vicious and sinful nature, and by consequence found themselves under a necessity, in several instances, to injure the scriptures by partial citations ; hereby making them appear to favour their notions, when otherwise they would not. Again, it is evident that those who make such a blundering business of proving their own creed, were never divinely authorised to make creeds for others, or to judge and condemn others creeds. There are many other things which are very evident, but as they would not be for the credit and reputation of the Committee, we content ourselves with only mentioning those things which are for their honour.*

whence these unaccountable consequences result ? "Man born into the world with a sinful nature." If this be true, God is the author of this sinfulness, as he is the author of man's nature ; this I have shewn. "Man not now made in the moral image of God." If by the moral image of God, these Gentlemen intend holiness ; I am not their opponent, never supposing that we were born, in this sense, holy.—I know of no scripture that says that any man was ever born, or ever made in the image of God in this sense, that he was made holy : If the Committee will produce one *express* scripture (as, upon this subject they deal altogether in *express* scriptures) to prove that any one man ever came out of the hands of God an holy creature, the sentiment shall, at once, have a place in my creed. Perhaps Gen. i. 27, will be cited as an *express scripture* in the case---' So God made man in his own image, in the image of God made he him.' Very true, so man was made in the image of God after the flood, which is given as a reason against murder, and that the murderer should be punished with death, see Gen. ix. 6, ' Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed : For in the image of God made he man.' Both in Gen. i. 27, and ix. 6, the original word translated *image* is the very same : To say therefore, that the image of God in Gen. i.



27, intends holiness, and in *Gen: ix. 6*, intends something else, essentially distinct and different, is altogether without evidence, and is taking a licence to say any thing ; especially when the inspired historian, in those words, plainly refers to the manner and condition of man's first creation, and founds his reason against murder upon this supposition, viz. that mankind were then made in the image of God in like manner as he was at first, which, upon a different supposition, would be utterly inconclusive. However, it lies upon the Committee to prove that the image of God, *Gen. i. 27*, was holiness ; and upon such an important point, I shall receive nothing, as proof, but *express* scripture ; for I do not suppose that such a cardinal point in the system of some men's divinity, is left to be spelt out, and inferred by way of consequence from implicit and doubtful scriptures ; which, when they shall have produced, these *express* scriptures will equally prove that men in *Noah's* time, and by consequence to the end of the world, were made, in like manner, in the image of God, *i. e. holy.---* That men after the flood were in the image of God, and his favourites, as they came into being, equally with *Adam*, is further manifest from the original blessing being repeated, without any variation, except a little enlargement, and pronounced on the future

formation of the human nature, see *Gen. ix. 1, 2, 3.* And is established by the Apostle *James*, who informs us, chap. iii. ver. 9, that men indefinitely are made in the *similitude* of God. "Man not free from guilt or desert of punishment." What, pray are they guilty of as they come into existence, and why guilty? What punishment are they liable to, and why liable? Did they ever transgress any divine law, or give their suffrage that any body else should in their name, and on their behalf? Have they any quality either of mind or body, as they come into being, that they did not receive, while themselves were altogether *passive* and *inconscious*? Does the Committee mean to adopt the 9th article of the 39 articles of the church of *England*, viz, "That original, or birth sin, is the fault or corruption of the nature of every man, that is. naturally engendered of the offspring of *Adam*; and in every person born into this world, it *deserveth God's wrath and damnation*?" Original sin, one of the most learned bishops of the church of *England*, hath frankly declared "to be a contradiction in terms; for as the word sin implies an act of the will, so the word original implies the direct contrary; and supposes the criminal act to have been committed by another, to which act that person to whom the sin is imputed, neither contributed by thought, word, or

deed."\* Says another famous writer upon the above article---" To affirm that every member of the human race, upon the account of *Adam's sin*, doth really *merit God's wrath and damnation*, i. e. that infants are no sooner born than they become just objects of God's *heavy anger* and *deserve to be damned* : To be *damned for an act* in which they had not the least share ; an act committed *six thousand* years before they came into being. That the all-perfect and blessed God is angry even to *wrath*, with the work of his own hands, who never have done, were never capable of doing the least thing to *offend* him. This will be pronounced a doctrine so abhorrent to nature, to justice, to truth (may it not be said, so *impious* and *prophane*) that it is candidly presumed, that there is not one sensible and sober *clergyman* in the kingdom who believes it."†

ART. III. &c.---Voted dangerous by the council : It must undoubtedly be dangerous if voted to : But what reasons do they offer to prove this article dangerous, besides their vote ? Why truly they have found more *express scriptures*---*Rom. iv. 5, 6. But to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*---*Even as David also describeth*

---

\* Thoughts on Self Love, innate Ideas, &c. p. 17.

† The Dissenting Gentleman &c. p. 305.



*the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works ;* and then go on to observe upon the words---“ In these words the blessings of the covenant of grace are *expressly* suspended on faith, but they could not be, if obedience in distinction from faith were the only condition.”—But, pray, who are these Gentlemen contending with ? Not surely with me, but with their own shadow---with a man of straw of their own manufacture. Did I ever contradistinguish obedience from faith, either in public or private ? Would this anonymous committee hold the public in hand that I fancy obedience, in distinction from faith, is the only condition of the covenant of grace ? It seems so ; and herein they have abused me, and imposed upon the public. Could they imagine me so weak and childish ? A just cause needs no such measures to support it.\* Faith is an act

---

\* Had the Gentlemen who sat in Consecration of late at *West-Stafford* dropt their popish claim of authority ; rejected the words *require* and *judge* in their *subpœna* ; and admitted me to a friendly conference as their brother and equal, I might, in a few words, have given them full satisfaction respecting this, and perhaps some other points of difference ; but this could not be obtained—I could have appeared before them in no other character than that of a criminal at the bar of his judges waiting the fatal sentence : This religion and conscience would not suffer me to do. And I have the pleasure since that time, to find that I am not the only instance of this nature that ever happened in this State.—The Rev. Mr. *Noyes*, former minister at *New-Haven*, was suspected by the Corporation of Yale College, of corruptness in the faith ; they took it upon them therefore to call this *aged father*, to examination, as having authority over him, “ Or in plain English (as the Rev. Mr. *Hart* of *Saybrook* says, from whom I have the account) they acted towards him, on this occasion, not as friends and brethren, but as *inquisitors*.” He told them plainly that they had no right to examine him in such a manner, and that he would not be thus examined by them—“ And in this,” says Mr. H. “ he did great honour to himself, and made a noble

of gospel obedience, equally with repentance, or any other religious exercise whatever, and declared to be such in the sacred pages, see *John vi. 29*, '*Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*' And *1 John iii. 23*, '*And this is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ.*' When I say obedience is the only condition, &c. I do, and ever did, include faith as an act of obedience equal with any exercise whatever, either of mind or body, and indeed the first act in the series; for I never supposed that men would obey the gospel while their minds did not assent to the gospel as true, and from God. The Committee seem to suppose that the blessings of the new covenant are suspended on faith, as distinguished from obedience, and would father this distinction on *St. Paul* in the words by them cited; but this is an evident perversion of his obvious sense and meaning: The plain design of the Apostle in this chapter is to convince the Jews that they had no pretence to glory, or exalt themselves above the

---

stand against the encroachments of arbitrary power." After this, the Corporation cited him in form, *required* him, I suppose, to appear before them at another session, and submit himself to be examined by them. He accordingly appeared and denied their jurisdiction; they affirmed it, and adjourned the trial of the poor Gentleman's case to another time, and never called it again. — The late Consociation, in this instance, were not so wise, if the nameless Committee were of their number, as is suspected by some people. God grant I may be the last in this, or any other State, who shall be thus called to buckle on the harness in defence of that liberty where-with Jesus Christ has made Christians free.

Gentiles, now in the time of the gospel, because descended from *Abraham* : But how does he do this ? Why first, by shewing them that their father *Abraham* was justified by faith, and so had not whereof to glory, since he received righteousness as a gift, and not a debt by obedience to the legal dispensation. Secondly, Because neither they of the circumcision, nor they who had the law, but they only who had faith were the seed of *Abraham*, to whom the promise was made. Therefore the blessing of justification was intended for the Gentiles; and bestowed on them, as well as on the Jews, and upon the same ground. The opposition therefore the Apostle makes between faith and work, in the 5th and 6th verses, is not an opposition between faith and work in obedience to the gospel of Christ, as the Committee would feign have it ; but between faith and work in obedience to the Jewish law, to which the Jews were surprizingly attached, and in obedience to which they looked for righteousness and life. To impute righteousness in the 6th verse, and not to impute sin in the 8th, intend the same thing, as *Locke* well observes, the Apostle in these two verses using these two expressions as equivalent ; which import no more than that God does not reckon, or put sin to the account of any one. By thus mistaking the design and meaning of



St. *Paul* in those verses, the Gentlemen have unhappily ran into the error that we are justified by a faith distinct from, and no part of gospel obedience ; and this unlucky mistake was the only reason why they fell out with the article, and voted it dangerous. I could wish this Committee would give us a description of their faith as contradistinguished from gospel obedience, that we might know what it is, and how it looks ; for I freely confess I can obtain no idea of such a faith, nor in any measure determine what it is the likeness of.

After observing that holiness is necessary to happiness, and that the gospel contains the most weighty arguments to universal obedience, they observe, " That this obedience is the fruit of an union with Christ, and it can no more exist without this union, than the branch severed from the vine can bear fruit," and cite *Rom.* iv. 5, and xi. 6. What these two verses are cited for, it is utterly beyond me to discover, unless cited with an " however they are to be understood" ---as a text of scripture is cited by the Rev. Mr. *Buckminster*, in a late pamphlet, p. 38, which is quite a modern method of citation, and aducing proofs from the Bible in this manner, one scripture will answer the purpose as well as another : However, agreeable to what the Committee say above, faith and saving union

with Christ are antecedent to obedience, or any good influence gospel motives can have upon the human mind : Therefore believing is no act of obedience, though a commanded duty : Therefore those weighty gospel arguments to universal obedience are motives to none but those who are united to Christ : Therefore the unregenerate, with respect to religion and eternity, are not free agents : Therefore the gospel is of no advantage to them. Are these notions according to Godliness ?

ART IV. &c. Owned and defended : Voted unscriptural and dangerous according to charge. My defence, it seems, was their only evidence ; but let me ask this Committee, did I ever own and defend the above article in the words in which it stands ? This you have asserted in your condemnatory report, although what you assert is utterly beside the truth, and openly abusive : Doubtless you had my defence in your hands, or at command ; in which defence I maintain the proposition, not in the words of the article which you have had the boldness to say I owned and defended, but in the words following---“ That we have all power *necessary* to do what the gospel requires of us *in order* to our *taking benefit thereby*, is what I affirm.” These words convey a very different idea from the words of the article, and

import no more than that ' *God is not an hard master, reaping where he has not sowed, and gathering where he has not strewed.*' *Matth. xxv. 24.* The only sentiment I meant to maintain in the above sentence out of my defence, in my public discourses, and private conversation, was and is simply this, that the father of mercies does not require any of his creatures to exercise a power they have not ; or perform an impossibility as a condition of his favour, or of their taking benefit by Christ's gospel ; and if the Committee, or any other man, will avow the contrary, they alone must bear the sin and shame of it ; as, if I have any consistent ideas of the divine character, it would be a most vile reflection upon the equity and goodness of the great parent of men and angels, and a reproach to the benevolence of the saviour, and the design of his gospel.---The Committee proceed ; " Mr. *Foster* wholly explodes the distinction between natural and moral power as foolish and ridiculous, and in his defence *expressly* asserts that we have all power *necessary* to do what the gospel requires of us, in order to *inherit* its blessings." I said, ' we have all power necessary to do what the Gospel requires of us in order to our *taking benefit thereby* : ' These are my words *verbatim* as they stand in my defence. Now are these words, *in order to inherit its bless-*



ings, an *express* repetition of these words; in order to our taking benefit thereby? It is evidently the case that these gentlemen have struck up a new meaning to the words *express* and *expressly*; this I had much rather suppose, than to imagine they meant to tell lies. The distinction between natural and moral power, as understood, applied, and defended by some modern continental writers; whereby they have grossly injured the divine character, and even made the holy God the author of all wickedness, I disclaim: If any divine is pleased to call the power and exercises of the mind, moral power and moral exercises; and the power and exercises of the body natural; and will make and apply this distinction in such a manner as not to bear hard upon the moral character of the deity, I am not disposed to contend about words: But this I maintain, that whatever defect, either in mind or body, we brought into the world with us, and is coeval with our existence, is properly a natural defect. If there be an *inability* to holiness, and a *prevailing propensity* to sin in the *very nature* of man as *existing*, so that he *cannot* will, nor *act* otherwise, until a *physical* exertion of divine power upon his mind; I think this *inability*, and this *propensity*, and the *necessity* resulting herefrom, is, to all *intents* and *purposes*, *natural*, as it springs from his *nature*.

and the *very condition* of his *being*. And as we are but the *passive recipients* of this nature, which, with all its endowments and qualities, comes from the *finishing hands* of its *divine author* ; to these two consequences, I think, will *naturally* and *necessarily* follow, viz. 1. That *human nature* in every man as he comes into the world, is not possessed of *vicious* and *hateful* qualities. 2. That God requires *no more* of us than the *nature* he has given us will enable us to perform. Therefore to say, we have a *natural* ability to do *all* the gospel requires of us in order to our taking benefit thereby, but not a *moral* ; that a *natural* inability excuses, but a *moral* does not, is, I humbly conceive, evidently impertinent, and, which is much more, an insult upon the divine wisdom, justice and goodness ; and not only so, but it is, I fancy, making a distinction between the powers of nature, that the bible knows nothing about. If the *man*, as an *intelligent, accountable creature of God*, is unable to perform a certain thing, let his inability be what you please, and give it what name you please, I would ask, First, Whether God requires the man to do this thing as a condition of his favour and grace, and will punish him eternally for not doing the thing, while he does not grant him power sufficient to overcome the resistance to be met with in the doing of it ?

Second, Whether an avowal of the affirmative does not involve in it this proposition, viz. That the Almighty has suspended his favour and grace upon an impossible condition, and inflicts a penalty upon the non-performance of this impossible condition ? And Third, Whether this is not a gross reflection upon the divine character, by making God an hard master, reaping where he has not sowed ? &c.

The Committee disclaim the notion of God's requiring natural impossibilities as they are pleased to call them, yet seem to suppose that God requires impossibilities in some sense, or other, for they go on to say---“ But at the same time, must believe that man's inability to holiness is such as fully to justify those words of our saviour, *John vi. 44*, ‘ *No man can come unto me, except the father which hath sent me draw him.*’ And of the Apostle, *Rom. viii. 7*, ‘ *The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*” But are *impossibilities* required of us in either of these scriptures ? Far otherwise, I think : It is true, we cannot come to Christ in the sense of our saviour's words, without the drawing of the father ; and it is as true we are not required to, without and separate from this drawing : We are capable of being drawn, we can be workers together with God, and neither more nor less is re-



quired of us in this affair : How then does the thing required exceed the ability to perform ? As to the words of St. *Paul*, every body, I suppose, will grant that a carnal fleshly mind, that is in pursuit of the things of the flesh, is not subject to God's law, and indeed cannot be remaining so ; so our saviour informs us, that '*no man can serve two masters*;' but what is all this to the purpose ? Because a man cannot convert himself without divine help ; because a carnal fleshly mind is not, and remaining such, cannot be subject to God's laws, *i. e.* because a man cannot serve two masters : Does it therefore follow, First, That such scriptures are a *proof* of the distinction between natural and moral power, as the *Committee* would *understand* and *apply* it ? Second, That man is *utterly unable* to do what the gospel requires in order *partake* of its *benefits* ? And Third, That God *requires impossibilities* of his creatures as a *condition* of the bestowment of his *grace* ? It is *surprising* that men should use Bible and reason in this manner !

But they proceed---“ Should we admit that man hath full power to do all that the gospel requires of him, in every sense in which he might be said to possess it, we conceive we must then admit a principle of holiness in him naturally, in his fallen state, contrary to the word of God, or utterly deny the force of

moral obligation."---Only add the words, '*in order to our taking benefit thereby,*' which words, I must think, they have designedly suppressed all along, in order to give themselves scope, by misrepresentation, to cast an odium upon me and my sentiments before the world ;\* I say only add the words, *in order, &c.* and their reasoning as it respects the case in hand, will stand thus---Should we admit that man hath full power to do all that the gospel requires of him *in order to his taking benefit thereby*, in every sense in which he might be said to possess a full power to do all that the gospel requires of him *in order to his taking benefit thereby*, we conceive we must then admit a principle of holiness in him naturally, &c. The public may judge whether such reasoning is to the case, or not, or even to the credit of those who use it.---- I would ask this Committee, are we under obligation to yield the *same* obedience that *Adam* was, as a term of the divine favour ? Are we required to *exercise* holiness *in order* to holiness ? And by the force of *moral obligation*, are the unregenerate bound to yield

---

\* I mean not to charge all Calvinists with being influenced by the spirit of *Calvin*, though in many instances it appears, and seems inseparable from the tenets themselves, which have in innumerable instances been manifested by the unchristian methods taken for their support.—Mr. *John Calvin* himself, was a great persecutor—wrote a book, as well as *Beza*, in defence of persecuting measures, and treated several, not inferior to himself, with great dissingenuity, and even inhumanity merely because they differed from him in sentiment——witness *Costellio*, *Serwetius*, and *Saxm Balles*.—*Vid.* History of Religion, vol. II, pages 138, 172, 173, 174.

this obedience, and exercise such a principle in order that divine grace be conferred? If such opinions as these are couched under the above dark and ambiguous citation, it is desired they would emerge out of obscurity, and in day-light avow the opinions, and not hide themselves in clouds, and darken counsel by words without knowledge. They conclude thus—"For to adapt the rule of duty to the bias of the depraved heart, is to make it what we please—and it is repugnant to all our notions of the perfections of the deity, that he should give his rational creatures such mutable variable laws, for his laws are all like himself holy, just, and good immutably." Then God cannot publish a law of grace through a mediator, and suspend a promise of saving blessings upon the faithful and persevering endeavours of his sinful creatures as the condition of their bestowment: I say, God cannot do this, unless he renders his laws mutable by *adapting them to the bias of the depraved heart*? He cannot in and through the great redeemer, publish liberty to captives upon a condition possible for them to perform, and not destroy the immutable holiness, justice and goodness of his own laws? What would they insinuate but something like this? The Gentlemen appear to me to be greatly confused in their notion of things, owing, I am persuaded, to their not making



the following necessary distinction, viz. between what is God's work, and what is ours in the affair of our salvation : To renew the mind is the work of God, divine grace is his gift. — Our business is to improve our talents in the best manner we are able ; to exert our faculties in endeavouring after divine grace in the way of God's appointment ; to seek for divine wisdom as for silver, &c. God does not require us to exercise a principle, power or faculty we have not, in order to the obtainment of any blessing whether temporal or eternal. For as *Wollaston* well observes, " If he has no such power, then his power of that kind and degree is nothing ; and it is nothing that is required to be applied : Therefore nothing is required to be done."\* And *Dr. Oswald* --- " A connection betwixt obligation, and power to fulfil the obligation, is apparent ; and so inviolable, that if you set aside the latter, the former vanishes of course. In all contracts, and without an exprefs contract, it is understood, that whoever fails in fulfilling his obligation, lies under the penalty : But whoever thought any person under an obligation to do what he hath not power to do ? Mad men, and tyrants, who are often mad enough, may insist on obligations to perform impossibilities ; but that learned men should maintain a sub-

---

\* *WOLLASTON'S Religion of nature, &c. p. 109.*

the debate on any such supposition, is unaccountable. There is not only an apparent and inviolable connection betwixt power and obligation ; but the last is commensurate to the first : Which, by the bye, lays the learned under an obligation to make mankind acquainted with the extent of their powers ; because, in proportion to them, they shall be accountable to him from whom they are derived."†

ART. V. Owned and defended : Voted *unscriptural* and *dangerous* : This vote is an *unanswerable* reason ; I shall not therefore enter the list with it, but let it stand in its *full force*, and go to the *law*, and to the *testimony*, if they speak not *according* to this *word*, it is because there is no *light* in them. I shall do little else here but consider the evidence they have advanced in defence of the negative. After observing that I appear openly to defend the article, they say, " But to us it appears *directly opposite* to, and *subversive* of the *gospel method* of *salvation*." A very heavy charge surely, and not to be exhibited against a fellow Christian, *much less* against a fellow labourer in the kingdom of the *prince of peace*, without *direct* and *indubitable* evidence from the unerring standard of religious truth, the holy scriptures. But what evi-

---

† OSWALD'S Appeal to common sense in behalf of religion. Vol. II. p. 202-3.

dence have these confident judges and condemners of my creed produced in defence of this their weighty charge? How have they made the article appear *opposite to*, yea, even *subversive* of the *gospel method* of salvation? Why their evidence is ushered in with a *self-contradictory* assertion in the following words--“No doctrine is more plain and frequently taught as a foundation principle in the holy scripture, than that the *believer's* justification before God is *wholly* on account of Christ's righteousness.”† Respecting this remarkable period, I would ask the following questions, First, Whether something is not required to be done by us in order to our justification? Second, Whether, when a favour is conferred upon me *wholly* on account of what another has done, any thing can be required of me as a condition of its bestowment? Third, Whether the above citation is not *self-contradictory*, by supposing that faith is a *qualification* or *condition* in the subject, *prerequisite* to justification, and yet that we are justified *wholly* on account of Christ's

---

† Here it must be confessed, nor need we dissemble it, that personal merit or demerit cannot be transferred, righteousness or guilt cannot be shifted from one to another.

LANGHORN'S Sermon. Vol. II. p. 235.

And it must be owned, that our saviour's *good actions* cannot be properly and strictly ours, nor our *bad actions* his: And in this sense, personal merit and demerit cannot be transferred.

SEED'S Sermon. Vol. II. p. 394.

The soul in all actings of faith on Christ's righteousness, ought to look at this righteousness as in Christ, and not in himself who believeth.

Dr. WILLIAMS, Vol. III. p. 44.

A Judge pronounceth men to be what they are according to law, and not makes them to be righteous who are not. BAXTER, on Justification.



*righteousness* ? But let us look into their scriptures ; “ *Rom. iii. 28, A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* ” It is desired that the reader would particularly bear in mind what this and some following scriptures are brought to prove, viz. “ That the believer’s justification before God is *wholly* on account of *Christ’s righteousness.* ” The Apostle’s words are, as cited by the Committee, ‘ *A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* ’ The consequence they would draw, and indeed it must be drawn, for it will *never follow*, is this, therefore we are justified *wholly* on account of Christ’s righteousness : Because the Apostle tells the Jews that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Jewish law, in obedience to which law they were seeking to be justified ; that therefore we under the gospel are justified without obedience to the laws of Christ, though justified by faith, as the Apostle declares in the words, which faith is an act of personal obedience to the Christian law, without which no one can ever be justified. The Committee first contradict themselves, and then, to keep themselves in countenance, haul in St. Paul as favouring their absurdity. The next scripture cited by them is the 20th verse of the same chapter--- ‘ *By the deeds of the law there shall no Flesh be justified in his sight ;* ’ i. e. by obedience to the law as meri-

*torious* no man can be justified in his sight. But is this plainly taught us in the words, viz. that we are justified *wholly* on account of *Christ's righteousness*, without and separate from obedience to the laws of Christ; especially when the *same Apostle*, in the *same chapter*, verse 28th, asserts justification by *faith*, which *faith* is an *act* of gospel obedience? They proceed—"Titus iii. 7, That being justified by his grace, we shall be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." i. e. we are justified by the grace and mercy of the gospel through Christ, and not by virtue of our own works as meritorious of so great a favour; though none but the obedient believer is, or can be justified upon the gospel plan.--But from these words are we "*plainly taught* that the *believer's* justification before God is *wholly* on account of *Christ's righteousness*"---i. e. are we plainly taught a palpable contradiction? A gift bestowed upon me *wholly* on the account of another person, and yet suspended on a *personal act* of my own, as a *prerequisite* or *condition* of its bestowment, I look upon as a *contradiction in terms*. They go on to cite "*Rom. v. 19, So by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*" Another instance of their abuse of scripture, by partial citations; whereas had they been honest enough to have cited the whole verse, any one *conversant* with the *hible*, would

have *seen at once* that this scripture was neither *expressly* nor *implicitly* to their purpose. But to take them on their own ground---If the Committee imagine St. *Paul* to speak in this and the preceeding verse, of *that* righteousness, and *that* justification which is to *life eternal*, why will they insist upon making St. *Paul* contradict himself, by dreaming that this justification, and this being made righteous, must exclude all reference to, and connection with, our personal obedience, when faith, which is an act of personal obedience to an express command of the gospel law. is expressly made a condition of our justification by St. *Paul* himself ; yea, even in the words these Gentlemen themselves have had the handling of ? They proceed next to give us the sum total of the above scriptures in the following words ; “ Can any thing be more evident from these and similar texts than that the matter of our justification before God is not our own personal defective obedience, but the all-perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone ? ” *i. e.* Can any thing be more evident, &c. than that the matter of our justification before God is not our own personal defective obedience, but the all-perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by *an act of personal obedience*. How is it possible that men can reason thus, and drag confe-



quences in this manner ; men who look upon themselves divinely authorised to be the judges of other people's creeds, and to justify or condemn them at pleasure ? But perhaps what follows will relieve the difficulty ; " This righteousness of Christ is the *sole and exclusive ground* of our pardon and acceptance with God and *justification* at the *Redeemer's bar*."\* But how do they make

---

\* This assertion of the Committee is contradictory, in my opinion, First, To themselves. In one place they speak of the believer's justification being *wholly* on account of Christ's righteousness—in another that Christ's righteousness is received by faith alone—But here they say, " The righteousness of Christ is the *sole and exclusive ground* of our pardon and acceptance with God, and *justification* at the *redeemer's bar*." That we are justified by faith, and that Christ's righteousness is the *sole and exclusive ground* of our justification, are propositions contradictory the one to the other ; it is to include and exclude faith at the same time. " If all works are excluded in our justification, and faith be a work, then faith is excluded : But faith is a work." (a) " It is gospel preaching to call men to believe, repent, and to tell them, if they do so, God will, for Christ's sake, forgive them ; and if they do not so, their sin will remain." (b) If faith and repentance are requisite conditions in the subject, without which he will never be pardoned and justified, then the righteousness of Christ is not the *sole and exclusive ground* of our pardon and justification ; unless they mean by this phrase that it is the *sole and exclusively inclusive ground*, &c. i. e. *inclusive of faith* ; which they themselves seem to include, or rather to include and exclude as best suits their purpose. Second, To the express declaration of the redeemer himself. Where the bar of the redeemer is, his Apostle has told us, 2 Cor. v. 10. By what rule the redeemer will proceed in justifying and condemning, rewarding and punishing, at this his bar, he himself has informed us, *Matth.* xii. 37. and xxv. 31 verse to the end. Hence we see that our final doom will be fixed, not by virtue of the righteousness of another, or our interest in it, but according to our moral behaviour while in a state of trial and discipline. " We shall be judged by the grace and mercy of the gospel, and not by the rigours of unrelenting justice. God will indeed judge the world in righteousness, but it is by an *evangelical*, not a *legal righteousness*." (c)—" But we must obey all the laws of our saviour, if we would be owned by him, and would be accepted in him ; which is that *evangelical righteousness*, upon which our final justification and absolution by our saviour, when he shall come to judge the world, depends." (d) Third, It gives us a false character of the moral governor of the world, as though, in the distribution

(a) Baxter on *Justification*, p. 193. (b) Owen on *Justification*, p. 234.  
 (c) Dr. Atterbury's *Sermons*, vol. II. p. 154-55. (d) Dr. Sherlock's *Sermons*, vol. II. p. 44.

evident the above anti-scriptural notion ? Why, "*Rom. x. 4, For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*" i. e. the design and end of the law was to bring men to Christ, that by believing in him, in obedience to his gospel, they might obtain justification. Is this scripture *full and express* evidence, that the righteousness of Christ is the *sole and exclusive* ground of our pardon and acceptance with God, and justification at the redeemer's bar, when not a word is said in the text about Christ's personal righteousness ; not a word about our pardon and acceptance with God, and justification at the redeemer's bar ? Our final justification and acquittal at the redeemer's bar is a subject as foreign, I conceive, from the design of St. Paul in the 10th chapter to the Romans as any subject can possibly be conceived to be, and any text within the limits of the sacred canon would have answered the purpose just as well. Shall such *profound reason-*

---

distribution of his favours, he paid no regard to the moral characters of his subjects, whether deserving of praise or blame, reward or punishment. "Moral government consists, not barely in rewarding and punishing men for their actions, which the most tyrannical person may do ; but in rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked ; in rendering to men according to their actions, considered as good or evil. And the perfection of moral government consists in doing this, with regard to all intelligent creatures, in an exact proportion to their personal merits and demerits." (c)

Fourth, If Christ's righteousness be the *sole and exclusive* ground of our pardon and acceptance with God and justification at the redeemer's bar, I see not why an holy life in obedience to the laws of Christ, is not utterly and eternally excluded, and men justified and glorified here and hereafter in all their sins,

(c) Butler's *Analogy*, p. 66.

ers as these set up the trade of *creed making* and *creed-condemning* ! But we have not done with them upon this *opposing* and *subverting* article yet : “ Saints in glory, say they, are described as having their robes made white in the blood of the lamb, *Rev. vii. 14. These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.*” Would they, from these words, infer that we are not finally justified and acquitted at the redeemer’s bar by our own works, contrary to the plain declaration of the redeemer himself, and the Apostles who spoke in his name ? I also cite *Rev. xxi. 7. ‘ He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son ;’* and infer that we are not finally justified at the redeemer’s bar by the righteousness of Christ *solely and exclusively*, but by our own works ; and this inference is, at least, implicitly contained in the words whereas *Rev. vii. 14*, is far from appearing either expressly or implicitly to their purpose. They close ; “ If our works are the matter of our justification at the redeemer’s bar, it is difficult to say for what purpose Christ died, or how he is mediator between God and man.”——There is no difficulty at all in the affair, if men would not try to embarrass the most plain subject. Is it not in and through Christ as mediator of the new



covenant, that God, consistent with the honour of his laws and the glory of his name, can and does accept sinners to his favour in consequence of their faithfully seeking him in the way of the gospel ? And is it not through Christ that our works of righteousness in obedience to the gospel, though imperfect, meet the divine approbation and the reward of life ? yea, is it not through Christ that we are granted even a state of trial for a future happy life ? We are not absolved at last by virtue of our works, but with an eye to Christ as our daysman in whose advocacy we are interested, and through whom our persons and imperfect services find acceptance : Nevertheless, whatever Christ has done for us, and whatever interest we may be supposed to have in him, or his righteousness ; *it is a truth* according to godliness, and obvious to the reason of mankind, that if we are not found at last to have obeyed the gospel, we never shall be justified at the redeemer's bar, nor rewarded with life ; he will say unto all such, *I know you not* : On the contrary he who obeys the gospel in this world, shall meet a divine reward in the kingdom of his father, *Rom. ii. 7, 8, 9, 10. 1 Peter iv. 17. John xiii. 17.* Personal righteousness cannot be transferred ; we cannot, in any propriety of language, be said to be righteous with another's righteousness,

1 John iii. 7. ' *He that doeth righteousness is righteous even as he is righteous.*' Which words I wish may be particularly noticed by the reader, and especially by the Committee, who, to maintain their strange, anti-scriptural notion of our being pardoned and justified both here and hereafter *wholly, solely and exclusively* by *Christ's righteousness*, have been guilty of vilifying and speaking evil of the very righteousness the Apostle is speaking of in those words ; which they, I hope, will reflect on with a great degree of shame and compunction. Agreeable to all the representations we have in the sacred pages, of the solemn transactions of the last day, when all the sons of men are to be tried at the redeemer's bar for eternity, the final sentence, fixing the doom of every one, will pass according to the deeds done here in the body : Those who obey the gospel are finally justified and acquitted ; those who disobey it are condemned ; while not one word is spoken about our interest in the righteousness of another, or its imputation (which is inconsistent with the nature of things) being the matter of our final acquittal : And indeed the supposition, that the righteousness of another is the *sole and exclusive* ground of our final justification at the redeemer's bar, is directly subversive of the divine moral government ; if this be the case, how can the moral gover-

nor and righteous judge of the world have any regard to personal merit and demerit in distributing rewards and punishments among his creatures ? And by consequence, how can he have any regard to moral worth and excellency, though a particular regard to personal merit and demerit, to moral worth and excellency, are inseparable from the idea of the moral government, and a state of trial ? This is to subvert not only *revealed religion*, but *natural religion* also, and to *demolish* at *one blow* the *whole government* of the *deity*, whether *natural* or *moral*. For these reasons, with others that might be mentioned, I am still constrained to believe, with Christ and his Apostles, that our works in obedience or disobedience to the gospel will be the ground of the divine procedure at the great day, and according to which our final state will be determined ; especially as the gospel is God's rule of government at present with respect to all those under the light of it ; for I cannot persuade myself to believe that God, whose rules of government are perfect regularity and right, will have one rule of government, and another and different rule of judgment and final retribution. As to the reasons you have offered, and the scriptures you have adduced in support of the negative, they appear to me utterly inconclusive, and nothing to the purpose ; and it is surprising to me, as



well as to many others, that you should, with such a preremptory air, pronounce the article *unscriptural* and *dangerous, opposite to, and subversive of, the gospel method of salvation*, upon such slight evidence, which in reality is no evidence at all ! But what lengths will not indiscreet zeal and bigotry carry men ! If you have heavier artillery to bring up, pray exhibit it---let the truth appear ; I engage for myself to yield to scripture and reason, and appear on the side of the truth as it is in Jesus, though I mean not to be dragooned into a creed, or out of one. With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment ; he who judgeth me is the Lord.

ART. VI. &c. Voted, proved according to charge : " For the reasons, say they, we refer to the texts cited under the preceeding article." For the reasons of what, pray ? For the reasons why Christ righteousness is not sufficient, &c. Do they mean to deviate into truth by avowing the article ? Or are we referred to the texts cited under the preceeding article for the reasons why it is voted proved according to charge ? But perhaps they designed to vote the article *unscriptural* and *dangerous according to charge*, agreeable to constant usage in this case ; but it slipped their minds through a multiplicity of creed judging business : Or perhaps it was *lapsus penne*

of the scribes ; or perhaps ——— However, if they suppose the article contrary to *express* scripture as the others are, I would propound this simple question, viz. Whether the sufferings of Christ and his righteousness are designed to save people in their sins ? But as it is entirely uncertain what the Committee's design was, we can do no more than *for the reasons* to refer the reader to our observations upon their defence of the negative of the preceeding article, and wait until the obscurity is removed from this part of their report by another oracular response.

ART. VII. &c. Proved by vote. “ It is proved in the opinion of the Consociation that Mr. *Foster* explodes the idea of personal election, particularly in a Sermon delivered at the ordination of his son *Daniel*, pages 50 and 51.” The words referred to in my Sermon are as follows ; “ Did I believe and teach, as some do, that God from all eternity elected to glory by an absolute decree, a certain number of men, whom he foresaw undone by *Adam's* fall, appointed his son to undertake their redemption, who was to satisfy justice, merit glory, and make them physically mete for it, leaving the rest under the dreadful decree of reprobation, to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, without possibility of help,” &c. In this view of the decrees, I did, do still, and ever shall explode

them, while I believe there is a God, and that his ways are equal : And it is in this view of them the committee must avow them, if they would oppose me.

As to the article as it lies in the report of the Committee, it was known I denied it. They go on to say : " This doctrine," (*i. e.* the doctrine of election as represented in the above citation out of my sermon, for it is in that sense they avow the doctrine) " is *plainly* and *fully* taught in *divine revelation*" !! What ! is it *plainly* and *fully* taught in *divine revelation* that God from all eternity elected to glory, by an *absolute* decree, a certain number of men in such a manner as to denote a leaving the rest under the dreadful decree of reprobation, to perish without possibility of help ? It seems so, or they are not my opponents : But where are the scriptures in support of such a gloomy, fatal doctrine ? Have these men the confidence to appeal to the Bible for proof of such a suggestion ? Yes, they can first charge God foolishly,\* by charging him with making intelligent creatures to damn them, and then go to his word for proof of it---" *Eph. i. 11. In whom also*

---

\* " Predestination, a doctrine shocking, and manifestly contrary to all the notions men naturally have of God, as a wise, just and good being, was opposed by *Arminius* ; who left behind him a man better qualified than himself, to carry on the cause he had espoused, I mean the great *Episcopians* ; whose writings soon flew all over *Europe*, and were much read by the divines of the church of *England*, and to very good purpose ; for soon after *Calvanism* vanished from amongst them quite and clean." *CLARK'S Essay on Study*, p. 13, 16.



*we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will---* Verse 4, 5, *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world---having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ. Rom. viii. 29, He did predestinate---moreover whom he did predestinate,"* &c. &c. It happens very unlucky to the Committee that these citations from the Bible, in proof of *personal absolute* election, have no reference at all to any election of that nature, but only and simply to the call of the Gentiles in the kingdom of the Messiah by the publication of the gospel among them, as might easily be made to appear, and is fully shown by LOCKE in his Paraphrase, &c. It is strange there cannot be the words *predestinated, chosen, elect, ordained,* &c. in a text of scripture, but it is at once taken as proof of a personal, eternal, absolute election, whether they have reference to any such thing or not. In truth the notion is absolutely without Bible and reason. For further satisfaction I refer to my reply to the Rev. Mr. *Buckminster*, where the affair of the decrees is treated more at large.

ART. VIII. &c. " This article, say they, is proved according to charge in the judgment of this council in the sermon Mr. *Foster* preached at Mr. *Joel Foster's* ordination,"

and then proceed ; " This Confociation doubt not the sufficiency of the merits of the saviour for the whole world ; but it will not hence follow that Christ died for all intentionally alike, or that one as much as another is given to Christ." To say that the merits of Christ are sufficient for the redemption and salvation of the whole world, yet that it was the divine purpose that but a remnant should be redeemed and saved ; and therefore the benefits of our Lord's salutary passion, in the divine counsel and design, and in the application of them, are restrained to this remnant, appears to me inconsistent with the diffusive goodness and beneficence of the father and friend of men, and not coincident with the character God has seen fit to assume in relation to the human race ; as a God who taketh no pleasure in the death of him who dieth ; who would have all men be saved, &c. and is in effect to say, that Christ died no more for the non-elect, or those who, eventually, are not saved, than for the devils themselves who are reserved in chains, &c. It leaves those for whom he did not die, under an impossibility of pardon and salvation ; faith in Christ must be restrained to those for whom he intentionally died, the rest having nothing to believe respecting Christ, unless that his death was sufficient for their pardon and happiness, which is only to believe that God

could have saved them if he would ; and what comfort would it be to a condemned malefactor to know, that his prince could have pardoned and saved him, a price sufficient therefor having been paid, but he would not ? The Committee proceed to cite "*John xvii. 9, 20. I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*" "*I pray for them : I pray not for the world,*" &c. i. e. " I now offer up my prayer particularly for my Apostles who are designed for so great a work as preaching the gospel of the kingdom to both Jews and Gentiles, and therefore will stand in need of special divine assistance and support ; but I do not now intercede for the world in general : " Though at other times we find him praying for the world both Jews and Gentiles ; yea, even for his persecutors and murderers, "*Father forgive them for they know not what they do.*" " The sphere of his beneficence extended backwards to the foundation of the world, and reaches forward to the last conflagration ; so that nothing, which is capable of being saved, is *hid from the beat thereof*. He became the saviour of all ages, from the first birth of time to its last period ; the father of mankind, from the rising up of the sun, to



the going down of the same. The blessings of his coming into the world, are as extensive as the world, and as lasting as eternity. Our saviour laid down his life for the sins of the whole world. He came, *that as in Adam all die, so in Christ should all be made alive.*--- View leisurely the stupendous scheme ; a whole world redeemed from misery ; a whole world made happy, if their own impenitence doth not prevent it."† How noble and sublime these views of Christ's redemption ! But how debasing and dishonourary the views of those who would confine the redemption and intercession of Christ to a small remnant of the human race ! As to *John vi. 37*, the phrase *to be given of the father* does not signify the actual faith of those who are thus given, but only their preparation and qualifications to believe, by being convicted by the wonderful works our saviour wrought, that he was the true Messiah, and embracing him as such, laying aside their prejudices and carnal affections, which obstructed their coming to him ; and by being persuaded of the truth, design and importance of the gospel and therefore receive and attend upon the duties of it : And all are given to Christ, who thus receive him and his gospel ; but it is left with them whether they will be influenced by these means or

not, no force being put upon their minds, of their liberty of choice in the least infringed ; though as *Chrysoſtom* informs us, the *Manichees* made use of these words to destroy man's free will ; and therefore this father, with St. *Cyril*, and others, observe, in opposition to the *Manichees*, that Christ intends *no more* by the giving of the father, " but his revelation from above to a soul disposed to receive it." But what is this to the purpose of *particular redemption* ? They conclude with the following remarkable reasoning ; " If Christ died for all, as much for one as another, then if all do not actually participate of the benefits of his death and at last arrive to heaven, his purpose and intention must be frustrated." Christ's intention to die for all is one thing ; his intention to save all is another thing ; what I maintain is, that Christ of set purpose and design gave himself a ransom for all, and tasted death for every man, and therefore that his redemption is equally extended with the race of man ; and this his intention to die for all was absolute ; but his intention to save all, or any, is not absolute, but conditional ; universal salvation, and universal redemption are very different things, the former I deny, the latter I maintain. If the reasoning of the Committee is founded upon Christ's intention to die for all, it will stand thus ; If it was Christ's

intention to die for all, and all are not saved; this his intention must be frustrated ; but all are not saved—*Ergo*, The sophistry is manifest. If they refer to Christ's intention to save all, their reasoning is very foreign to the purpose, and effects not the truth of what I maintain.

The two last Articles, it seems, they got over without much difficulty.

The conclusion of the report of the Committee is in the following words and style---  
 “ Therefore *we* think ourselves *bolden in faithfulness* on this occasion; to *bear our open* testimony against the abovementioned doctrines held and taught by Mr. *Foster*; as being *not only contrary* to the *gospel*, and of *dangerous tendency*, but *some of them at least even subversive* of the *Christian institution*, and to say that *we* cannot but *look upon these errors* persisted in, as *utterly unqualifying* for the *Christian ministry*; and therefore that *we* cannot in *conscience hold communion with the pastor who persisteth in them.*”

Reply—“ We allow infallibility to no man, to no *set of men*, however dignified or distinguished. *Assemblies and Convocations, antient Councils and modern Synods* we think to have equal authority in the affairs of faith and religion ; that is, *none at all*, to bind the Consciences of others: We maintain that no two things can be



“ more contrary to one another than *faith*  
 “ and *force* ; that to employ *authority* against  
 “ *enquiries*, and to punish, for *mere opinions*,  
 “ for opinions, that do not affect the safety of  
 “ civil government, is a sin against reason  
 “ and revelation : It is *Popery* : It is *Hob-*  
 “ *bism*. We plead for *equal, impartial* li-  
 “ berty ; not meaning hereby a licence to  
 “ *trample* on religion, and to laugh at reve-  
 “ lation ; but a liberty for every man to ex-  
 “ amine *with care* the opinions of religion  
 “ he embraces ; a liberty to judge with *our*  
 “ *own understandings*, to believe with *our*  
 “ *own faith*, and to worship God according  
 “ to the dictates of *our own consciences*. O  
 “ sacred liberty ! Thou soul of happiness !  
 “ *Tecum vivere amem, tecum moriar libens*.  
 “ Our duty to God, to Christ, and to our  
 “ excellent religion, obliges us to renounce  
 “ in ourselves, and to oppose in others, *spi-*  
 “ *ritual tyranny*, and all *human impositions*,  
 “ as terms of communion ; the source of  
 “ schism, and the bane of the church's  
 “ peace. *Stand fast*, ye beloved in the  
 “ Lord, *in the liberty wherewith Christ hath*  
 “ *made you free*. Know your principles,  
 “ and never by an *inconsistent* conduct *de-*  
 “ *bale* your glory. An imposing non-con-  
 “ formist is as contradictory a character as a  
 “ non-resisting rebel.”

PRIOR.

The report is thus authenticated---" A true copy, Attest, *Theodore Hinsdale, Aaron Church, Scribes.*"

" A true copy."

*Question.* A true copy of what ?

*Answer.* ———

" Attest, *Theodore Hinsdale, Aaron Church.*"

*Question.* Who ordered you to attest this report ?

*Answer.* ———

Scribes."

*Question.* Who were you Scribes for ?

*Answer.* ——— !!

---

AN  
ADDRESS  
TO THE  
REVEREND ELDERS  
OF THE LATE  
CONSOCIATION AT WEST-STAFFORD.

REVEREND SIRs,

WHEN I received a citation, signed, *Theodore Hinsdale, Charles Backus,* &c. informing of the approach of your venerable body to *judge* upon articles of faith held and taught by me, and *requiring* me to make my appearance, as a criminal, at your bar, to answer to charges, &c.---I was well convinced, from the *haughty* and *assuming* style and spirit of your mandatory citation, what I must expect as the issue of your inquisitory proceedings: Your first public appearance in the House of God at Stafford, and the temper and spirit which were conspicuous in every step of your conduct, prefiged a rash conclusion, and the event has fully justified my previous apprehensions. But suffer me, with the freedom of a Christian,



to expostulate with you ; is not the Lord Jesus Christ the only lawgiver and king in his church, to whose authority and command, as to things of religion, Christians are bound to submit ? Are not the scriptures of the Old and New Testament the only standard of religious truth ? Has not every free and accountable creature full and undisturbed right to search the scriptures, judge and believe for himself ? Is religion any further praise-worthy than it is matter of choice ? Are not these the principles which our first reformers asserted with so good effect against the arbitrary claims of the Romish church ? And are they not the very basis and only support of the reformation ? Granting these principles, and they must be granted, or the reformation from popery is evidently schismatical, is it not palpably inconsistent with them all, to imagine that Christ has given to any man, or body of men, authority in matters of religious faith, to whose decrees, in point of doctrine, Christians are obliged, and ought to submit ? Is not the very claim of such authority equally and the same thing with a claim to infallibility ? Has God given to any man, or body of men, authority in matters of faith, to whom he has not given infallibility ? Then he has given to a man, or body of men, authority to lead men into error, a right to seduce and deceive : But let

it be granted, at present and for argument sake, that there is, and will always continue to be, a body of men upon earth, to whom Christ has given authority to decide in matters of religious faith, and to whose decisions Christians are subject, and ought to submit; I ask, Where shall we find this body of men? Is it the Pope with his Cardinals; or the king of *England* with his Parliament? Is it the Archbishop with his Bishops; or the Bishop of every diocese with his Dean and Chapter attending? Is it a Presbytery or Synod; Association or Confociation? Is it an ecclesiastical council, or a particular church? Is it any, or all of these? If all have this authority, then, by virtue of authority derived from Christ, Christianity may be made one thing in one country, and another thing in another country; in *England* it will be Episcopal; in *Scotland* a Presbyterian; in *France* a Popish; and in *Prussia* and *Connecticut* it will wear a Calvinistick form: But is Christ divided? Is this the unity of his kingdom? Is all this genuine Christianity? Then a man's religion must change with his change of climate, and this according to the will of Christ; then our separation from the church of *Rome* was a schismatical rebellion against the authority of Christ in his church. But if this authority does not reside equally in all these different bodies of

men, Which in particular has the only rightful claim to it ? Is it a Consociation in *Connecticut* constituted of Elders and Messengers ? Then I ask, Where is the divine institution for such a body in the gospel, and where the charter vesting them with this high power ? To what things and how far does this authority extend ? Is it limited or unlimited ? But I forbear—It never will be pretended that a *Connecticut* Consociation is of divine institution, or is constituted and vested with authority, in matters of faith, by a charter from Heaven : It is intirely a synodical institution, and *Saybrook* Platform is its charter : Whatever authority therefore is claimed and exercised by this body of men, by virtue of their institution and charter, is an authority not known in the New Testament, and by consequence is a bold usurpation of Christ's prerogative, and a stepping into his throne who is the only lawgiver and king in the church ; and every exercise of such authority is in fact spiritual tyranny, and to be disclaimed by all who would stand fast in the liberty wherewith Jesus Christ has made them free. If Christ is the only lawgiver and king in Zion ; if the holy scriptures are the only standard of religious truth ; if every free and accountable creature has full and undisturbed right to search the scriptures and judge for himself in all religious matters ;



and if religion is no further praise-worthy than it is matter of choice ; if these things are so, can it be supposed that Christ has given others authority to disturb, censure and persecute Christians in the exercise of this right, a right which Christ himself gave, and commanded the exercise of it ? God forbid ! And if Christians in common have this liberty, much more the Embassadors of Christ who are forbid to teach for doctrines the commands of men, but on the contrary are bound by office to teach the people all things whatsoever *Christ* has commanded them ; to deliver the whole counsel of God ; and to take heed to the ministry they have received of the *Lord*, that they fulfil it. By viewing the Lord Jesus Christ as only lawgiver, king and judge ; by making the scriptures of truth his only rule of faith and practice ; by using that liberty in the pursuit of divine knowledge which God has given him as a man, a Christian and a dispenser of the word of life ; by preaching his own candid and impartial interpretations of scripture to the people of his charge, and when solemnly obliged hereto by his commission, as a servant of Christ, and accountable to him as supreme pastor ; by these things does the faithful preacher justly expose himself to be judged, condemned, and excommunicated by his fellow servants, merely because he dis-

fers from them in his interpretations of scripture, and does he expose himself to all these evils agreeable to the laws and rules of Christ's kingdom? Dare any presume this! To whom, pray, is an Ambassador accountable, but to the authority that commissions him as such? -- With respect to the doctrines you have seen fit to condemn, though you had no right or authority from Christ so to do, I would expostulate with you---How is the opinion that mankind come into the world morally vicious and depraved, under the wrath and curse of God, and exposed to damnation consistent with the express declarations of the holy Bible, that God is the father of our spirits; formeth the spirit of of man within him; fashions us in the the womb; that his hands make and fashion us? Why will you make God the author of all wickedness? How can you believe that God is slow to anger and abundant in goodness, when he makes a creature such as it is, and then is angry even to wrath with the creature for being as it is? How can you suppose that obedience is not the only condition in the covenant of grace, when we read expressly in the Bible that Christ *'being made perfect, became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him'*? And that *'he who doeth righteousness is righteous'*? How can you entertain the opinion that men

have not both natural and moral power (if you are pleased to make this distinction) to do all that the gospel requires of them in order to their taking benefit thereby, when you hereby make the blessed God suspend the bestowment of saving benefits upon an impossible condition, and then eternally punish his creatures for non-performance ; though God is said to be long-suffering, not willing that any should perish ? Is not this to make God an hard master, reaping where he has not sowed, and finally punish his creatures for nothing ? How can you suppose that our good works are not the matter of our justification at the redeemer's bar, when obedience and disobedience are made the express conditions of our final justification and condemnation, *Rom. ii. 7*, and on---and when our works are made the only subject of enquiry at the great day, and when it is said that God will render to every man according to his *works* ?—How can you believe the doctrine of personal absolute eternal election to everlasting life ; that this election includes but a remnant of the human race, while the rest are passed by in God's eternal purpose and counsel, and left to perish without possibility of happiness, which, in other words, is to say, that God made the far greater part of men on purpose to damn them ; I say, how can you embrace



such an opinion, when the Bible expressly informs you that God hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, *Ezek. xviii. 23, 31*? What sincerity can there be in the general offers of gospel blessings, and all the means and methods of God with men, to allure them to himself and happiness? I plainly tell you, Gentlemen, that I look upon this doctrine reproachful to the divine character, and so long as I believe that God's *tender mercies* are over *all the works of his hands*, so long I shall continue to *reject* and *detest* such a doctrine.---How can you avow the notion of particular redemption when the Bible expressly informs you that Christ died for all in general, *1 Tim. iv. 10*; for every man in particular, *Heb. ii. 9*---that he died for the whole world without exception, *1 John ii. 2*.---without exception of the ungodly, *Rom. v. 6*.---without exception of enemies, *Rom. v. 10*, and without exception of those who perish, *2 Peter ii. 1*? How can men be said to render themselves worthy of sorer punishment for rejecting Christ and gospel grace, when, agreeable to this doctrine, Christ never died for them, gospel grace never was purchased for, nor designed to be conferred upon them? May I be said to deserve a more severe punishment for rejecting a favour that was never designed for me? But reasoning upon so plain a subject seems

impertinent.—I can assign no other reason why you have condemned these doctrines, and avowed their contraries, but an undue attachment to a particular system of opinions without free and impartial enquiry ; adhering, without proper examination, to human creeds, confessions of faith, &c. But to the *law* and to the *testimony*---*the Bible, the Bible only is the religion of Protestants.* Be entreated, Gentlemen, to pause one minute in your career, and view the ground you have gone over ; lay aside indiscreet zeal, passion, and prejudice, and let reason ascend the throne and influence you to calm reflection. In your retired and solemn moments do you enjoy the serene pleasure of self-applause in a review of the measure you have meted out to me, and the church of God in *West-Stafford* ? Do you feel justified in your own minds, and do you, with confidence, expect ere long to meet the approbation of your judge the Prince of Peace ? Can you, Reverend Sirs, I speak it with concern, can you be infatuated to that degree, after all that has been said, as to view yourselves invested with authority from Christ to dictate to the faith of your fellow men ? Authority to judge, condemn, and give up others to Satan merely because they differ from you in judgment and opinion in religious matters, in one word, because *they adopt not your creed* ?

Will you do all in your power to exclude a fellow servant the kingdom of Heaven, because his creed differs from yours, which is the very language of your late proceedings at *Stafford*? Will you continue to think you have this authority because when met you call yourselves a *Consociation*, for in your individual capacity you pretend not to such authority, when you have neither *precept* nor *example* of such a *body of men* in the *Bible* to keep yourselves in countenance; *no charter from Heaven* incorporating you a *Consociation*, and *vesting you* with this *authority* in matters of faith? Your claim to such authority is no better founded than the *Pope's claim to infallibility*, and if you have it, you are *schismatics* while you remain out of the *bosom of the holy mother church*, and ought directly repair to *Rome*. As I am an *Embassador of Christ*, though unworthy the honour and unequal to the service, I claim undisturbed liberty as such to search the scriptures, judge and believe for myself; and to preach my own sentiments, my own interpretations of scripture; I am not your *Embassador*; I received not my instructions from you, nor am I accountable to you, but to the *supreme pastor*; you may erect a petty tribunal; you may usurp Christ's throne; assume his prerogative; arraign a fellow servant; judge, condemn and excommunicate



him, because he presumes to differ from you in religious sentiments and dares to preach them : I say you may do all this because it is within the *compass of your power* ; but until you shall make it appear that you are *incorporated and empowered* so to do by a *charter directly from Heaven*, you cannot blame me, if I view you as *bold intruders and usurpers*, and *busy bodies* in matters that *do not belong to you*. I hope upon a serious review, you will see your error, retract it, and unite with me in defence of that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free ; We are Embassadors of the Prince of Peace ; are bound faithfully to deliver to our people, not the *dictates of fallible men*, but the *unerring counsels of Heaven* ; and ought ever to bear in mind through the course of our Ministry, that he who has called us to this important work will soon judge us *in righteousness* ; Gentlemen, I wish you God speed in every laudable attempt to support the religion of Christ and the cause of God ; but you may depend upon it, that, notwithstanding all you *have done, or can possibly do*, I shall, with steady, persevering aim, prosecute my duty to God and man ; the gospel which I have received of the Lord Jesus I *shall certainly preach*.

AN  
A D D R E S S  
TO THE  
P E O P L E  
OF THE  
STATE OF CONNECTICUT.

MY COUNTRYMEN AND FRIENDS,

**T**HE liberty we plead for, and have a right to expect, is not licentiousness, nor a liberty to laugh at and abuse a divine revelation; but the principle of equal, impartial liberty to all peaceable members of the civil state, both preachers and hearers, to search and examine the sacred scriptures, and to believe, profess and preach those tenets and doctrines, which appear to them to be agreeable to the scriptures, and to reject, with entire and perfect impunity, any, or all those tenets and doctrines, by whomsoever they are received or taught, as do not appear to them to be agreeable to the scriptures.

This notion of liberty was the very principle upon which the glorious Protestant reformation from *Popery* began, proceeded and

was finally effected. This is the very principle of religious liberty, for which the Protestant non-conformists, our illustrious ancestors in *Great-Britain*, contended unto blood, before and during the reigns of the Stuart family : For the enjoyment of this liberty they left their native country, crossed the Atlantic, and came into *America* : And this is the great and good principle upon which all *New-England* churches were first settled, and upon which they flourished for a great number of years. But alas ! whither are we their children going ! Surely with long and dismal strides we are returning again to *Rome* ! For only take away liberty of free enquiry, and free profession, in matters of religion and the worship of the deity, and *Protestantism* is instantly given up and destroyed, and *popery* inevitably introduced. And no longer than we hold the principle above, can we possibly defend the Protestant cause, nor ourselves in leaving the *Romish* communion. And will you, my countrymen, freely and without a struggle, give up that which is your very basis as Protestants, your birth-right privilege as reasonable, accountable creatures, your divine ornament and glory as Christian professors ! Will you become bound to believe as this or the other confession of faith directs, as this or the other ecclesiastick council shall decree, as this or



the other minister teaches you, though in direct contradiction to the clear dictates of your consciences, regulated by the word of God ! Will you resign your faith, your consciences, and your religion into the hands of any man, or body of men, and delegate them to think, reason, judge and believe for you ? Will you also appear before the tribunal of Christ, the king of Zion, and your eternal judge, by your delegates too ? And will they warrant your safe appearance there ? If not, surely it is unsafe for you to betrust them now with your faith, your religion, and your consciences ! I fancy I behold a mixture of horror, indignation and contempt in your very countenances, upon reading these queries ; to think that a bare motion should be made for you to resign every thing sacred and important to you on earth, and every thing dear and felicitating in a blessed immortality ! Your souls recoil at the naked thought of such horrid suicide, and so much ingratitude and impiety to the incarnate God, your saviour, who hath made you free ! And perhaps you are almost offended with me for suggesting such thoughts to you. But reflect one minute on what you have read above. An ecclesiastick council, gravely met, upon the invitation, not of a pastor or church, but of three or four disaffected individuals, to judge of articles of faith and doctrines of

*religion ; the accused pastor required to appear before them, and answer to charges of false and dangerous doctrines ; and they finally censuring, condemning, and then excommunicating the pastor ; though neither he nor his church ever embraced, but from the beginning refused the constitution of Connecticut churches, as it is to be learned from Saybrook agreement ! Herein you plainly see, and with your own eyes, the sacred liberty of conscience violated, the divine right of private judgment denied, protestantism overthrown, infallibility implicitly claimed, a wide door opened for the introduction of popery, and the prerogative of Christ, the only lawgiver in Zion, boldly assumed ! Look again and again upon the doings of that council ; consider and weigh them well. Open your eyes, rouse up your attention, get yourselves quite awake ; and do not suffer yourselves to be lulled to sleep by that vain and fallacious cry, *the church is in danger*, from false and corrupt doctrines entering into her. This has always been the cry of *lazy, idle drones*, who never will be at the pains of thinking out of the beaten tract, but receive their faith and religion, as they do their estates, from the last will and testament of those who went before them. Those that never did, and never will, bring any new thing out of their treasure, *as the good scribe always**

does, who is instructed to the kingdom of Heaven,' we may depend will certainly find fault with those that do. And, when reason and argument fail, such men will assume that armour which hath long been proved, and cry *heresy, heresy, the church is in danger!* and this always does the job with the ignorant and unwary? Before the *Nicene* council, *A. D. 325*, this was the constant cry, *heresy, heresy, the church is in danger!* And to still this cry all the ecclesiastick councils, for 400 years were convened. But did these councils, which met for the same purposes with that at *West-Stafford*, really deliver the church from danger? Good God! never, never was the church so much endangered by all the combinations of earth and hell against her, as she was by the decrees of these ecclesiastick councils! Will you, after more than 1400 years sad and awful experience of the fatal consequences of the acts and doings of ecclesiastick councils in matters of faith and the worship of God, be still imposed upon by the cry of *heresy, the church is in danger, &c.* "Now comes the fatal engine," says an author, "Ring the bells backward! The temple, the temple of the Lord is on fire. The church is in danger! This cry of the church's being in danger, has been a religious cloak, under which the most wicked flagitious crimes have been perpetrated."



ed: Witness all the histories of persecutions. The cry of *heresy* is more surprising to mankind, than the cry of fire; as the consequences have generally been more terrible and awful."

Read with your own eyes the history of the church, and see and judge for yourselves what always have been, and thence learn what always will be the consequences of the acts and doings of ecclesiastick councils, when they have undertaken to censure and condemn religious tenets and doctrines, and to impose subscription.

Do you imagine that our catechisms, confessions of faith, and present received forms, contain a complete and perfect system of revealed religion? Are they absolutely incapable of addition, amendment or correction? Are they of divine original, and stamped with the authority of a God, and is he to be accursed who shall attempt to add to, or diminish from them. You doubtless believe our catechisms and confession of faith were made by poor, weak, fallible men; who had no authority, and indeed never claimed any, to impose their interpretations of scripture upon others; but left every man at liberty to subscribe or not, according to the result of his own judgment. Why then should he be prosecuted in the *spiritual court* for *heresy*, who shall attempt to add to, diminish

from, amend or correct these catechisms, confessions, &c. and why should we pay the least attention to that old, trite, popish cry of *heresy, your church, your constitution is in danger* ! One would think this too enlightened an age to be priest-ridden and deacon-ridden at such a rate ! And it would be an unaccountable phenomenon to Europe, who have beheld with astonishment the military skill, prowess, fortitude and resolution of the sons of America, in asserting and defending their civil rights and privileges against lawless power and domination, now to see them tamely crouching beneath the intolerable weight of ecclesiastic tyranny and despotism, and yielding implicit faith and submission to the arbitrary decrees of their priests and deacons ; Only advert to these obvious considerations, that Christ Jesus is the only king in Zion ;---that he hath left the consciences of men at entire and absolute liberty from all human restraints, so that we have perfect divine right to search the sacred Oracles for ourselves, to see with our own eyes, judge with our own understandings, not being accountable to any intelligence in the universe, but him, for our religious tenets and sentiments : And that, *that* is a poor, sorry, withered, shabby faith in religion, absolutely unacceptable to Christ and unprofitable to ourselves, that is dictated by, and founded on, human authority !

We ought constantly to endeavour to make progress in Christian knowledge, as well as all other excellent attainments ; and never be content with what is already known ; or was known 200 years ago. That excellent and generous speech of Mr. *Robinson* to his congregation in *Holland*, just as a part of them were embarking for *America*, ought never to be forgotten by true protestants. Mr. *Robinson* kept a day of fasting and prayer with his church, and addressed them as follows, “ Brethren, we are now quickly to part from one another, and whether I may ever live to see your faces on earth any more, the God of Heaven only knows ; but whether the Lord has appointed that or no, I charge you before God and his blessed angels, that you follow me no farther than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. If God reveal any thing to you, by any other instrument of his, be as ready to receive it as ever you was to receive any truth by my ministry ; for I am verily persuaded, the Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of his holy word. For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go at present no farther than the instruments of their reformation. The *Lutherans* cannot be drawn to go beyond what *Luther* saw ; whatever part of



his will our God has revealed to *Calvin*, they will rather die than embrace it ; and the *Calvinists*, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented, for though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God, but were they now living, would be as willing to embrace farther light as that which they first received. I beseech you remember, it is an article of your church covenant, that *you be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written word of God*. Remember that, and every other article of your sacred covenant. But I must herewithal exhort you to take heed what you receive as truth, examine it, consider it and compare it with other scriptures of truth, before you receive it ; for it is not possible the christian world should come so lately out of such thick antichristian darkness, and that perfection of knowledge should break forth at once." NEAL'S *History of Puritans*, vol. I. p. 490, 491.

A true protestant was this great and good man. How firmly did he believe the right all christians have to search the holy scriptures, see and judge for themselves, and receive or reject whatever they shall judge to be agreeable or disagreeable thereto ! How

would his indignation have been kindled to have seen the proceedings of the late Con-  
fociation at *West-Stafford* ! and to have read  
their bold and arrogant result.

Let us endeavour to obtain the spirit of  
protestants, to assert and vindicate our liber-  
ties as men, as reasonable accountable crea-  
tures, and above all as christians ; and, in spite  
of all the daring, haughty, assuming, popish  
claims of any man, or body of men, let us  
stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ  
hath made us free.

**ISAAC FOSTER.**

---



---

# POSTSCRIPT;

*Containing some Circumstances that attended the PROCEEDINGS of CONSOCIATION, at West-Stafford, November 2, 1779.*

**N**OVEMBER 2d, P. M. the venerable body proceeded to the house of public worship, and, after prayer, the complaint was read by one of the scribes of council, and likewise the defence of the four articles, &c. Upon which the Rev. Mr. *Bliss*, a member of Consociation, arose, and began an impertinent harangue, which appeared evidently designed to mislead and impose upon the assembly, which was very numerous. The accused pastor repeatedly arose and requested liberty to read a paper he had in his hand, and obtained it finally with great difficulty, being told by several members of Consociation that Mr. *Bliss* was Advocate for the aggrieved, and *must* not be interrupted, and Mr. *Bliss* himself spake and said, "We did not come here, Mr. *Foster*, to hear you read papers, we came to judge." As the Consociation returned from the meeting-house to the council chamber, two of the members went into the house of the Rev. *Isaac Foster*, and then and there, of their own accord, said, that, at the desire of the



complainants, *Mr. Bliss* was voted *Advocate* for them by Consociation, and likewise that *Consociation*, for that reason, voted, that he should not be judge:

On the 3d of November, when the Consociation were in the meeting-house, and a large assembly of people collected, the Rev. *Mr. Bliss*, abovementioned, as was his constant practice in that place, was inveighing with the utmost bitterness against the doctrines taught and received in the church at *West-Stafford*, as false, heretical, &c. &c. The oldest scribe of Consociation spake and said, " I do not know but it ought to be known by this congregation, that *Mr. Bliss* is chosen by this council——" Here *Mr. Bliss* broke in immediately, and in a lower tone said, " That is not to be told ;" upon which the scribe ceased to speak further upon the matter. On the return of Consociation this day also, another and different member of their body called in at *Mr. Foster's* and made the same declaration concerning *Mr. Bliss*, that the others made the day before.

Here follows a complaint exhibited to Consociation by a number of men, members of the church in *West-Stafford*.

" *Stafford*, 4th Nov. 1779.

" To the venerable Consociation convened in this place,

" GENTLEMEN,

" WE would ask liberty to signify to you

our great and increasing dissatisfaction with some proceedings of your body ; particularly with your permitting the Rev. Mr. Bliss to deny, or at least to refuse to own his Advocacy for the complainants when in publick, though we had been previously acquainted with it by two of your own body : Thus leading the publick into an error with regard to his publick speeches. *Second*, We are greatly dissatisfied with Mr. Bliss on account of many hard and unkind speeches he has thrown out in publick, concerning the church and people in this place ; particularly an expression of his yesterday in publick---“ *Will you continue in your heresy,*” which things we do really look upon as unkind and ungenerous ; We are truly sorry, Gentlemen, to see any evidences of prejudice and partiality in any thing done in your venerable body, and should be glad to be informed a little, and satisfied as to these things.

“ *Nathan Johnson,  
Samuel Davis,  
Silas Blodget,  
Nathaniel Cushman,  
Samuel Bartlet,  
Timothy Clough,  
Lemuel Cross,*

*Micah Ross,  
Haniel Clark,  
Abel Johnson,  
Jabez Kent,  
Benjamin Davis,  
Joshua Kent,*

“ *Members of the church.*”

In reply to the above they received the following, which served but to dissatisfy

them the more, as they looked upon it as an evasion.

*" West-Stafford, Nov. 4th, 1779.*

*" To the Gentlemen members of the church who have signed the within paper, and others whom it may concern,*

*" THIS may certify that the Rev. Mr. Bliss has not undertaken the office of advocate for the complainants against the Rev. Isaac Foster, nor can with truth be considered so by any ; true it is the complainants desired of the council that Mr. Bliss might assist them in that character ; the council gave liberty that he might, and some of the members of council thence mistakenly concluded that he had undertaken ; hence arose your mistake : But the truth is, he did entirely decline the office, and accordingly has not been considered by the council in that character.*

*" Attested by*

*" THEODORE HINSDALE, Scribe  
of the council."*

This may be affirmed without hesitation, that the Rev. Mr. Bliss acted the part of an advocate in public during the whole time of the residence of Consociation in *West-Stafford*, and a most censorious, unchristian, and even inhuman part too ; and what the people complained of, or at least one thing they complained of, was, that Mr. Bliss should act



such a part, and appear in such a character in public, and yet deny, or at least refuse to own his advocacy for the complainants. If he was advocate they thought the public should have known it ; if he was not, it appeared to them very astonishing, that a judge should be suffered to act such a part, publicly to pre-judge the cause, and that in the most offensive, virulent terms. The reply to their complaint informed them, that although it was desired by the complainants that Mr. Bliss might assist them in the character of advocate, and that he had liberty so to do from the council ; yet he declined the office, and accordingly was not considered in that character by Consociation. But how does all this consist with the public and private voice of *many members of their own body, the oldest scribe in particular*, unitedly declaring that this Mr. Bliss was *advocate for the aggrieved*, that *he was voted advocate by Consociation, &c. &c.* all which can be substantially proved whenever there is need of it ? Further, if Mr. Bliss declined the office, why did he then publicly execute the office ? Why was he suffered to do so by Consociation ? And why was this given as a reason, by several aged members of the council, in particular by the oldest scribe, why Mr. Bliss must not be interrupted, viz. because he was advocate for the aggrieved ?

Mr. Bliss was either advocate, or judge, or both, or neither, if he was advocate, and we rather think he was, from the foregoing testimonies, and that this was what the oldest scribe was proceeding to acquaint the assembly with, when broke in upon by Mr. Bliss as related before ; if this was the case, why all these contradictions ? If he was judge, his public behaviour was insufferable upon any principles whatever. If he was both, it is a new thing under the sun, to make an attorney and judge of the same person, and upon the same case. If the Consociation considered Mr. Bliss in no character, we are perfectly willing he should stand for a cypher : But perhaps all these seeming contradictions may be perfectly reconciled by this one consideration, viz. that he was appointed *advocate for the Lord Jesus Christ*, as he declared himself to be in public ; but if he did really act in this character, we think he ought to have executed the office, at least, with some degree of *decency and decorum*.

Furthermore, on November 4th, when Consociation were in the meeting house, they promised the assembly that they should have timely notice when their result would be published. Nov. 5th a lecture preparatory to the holy communion was preached 3 o'clock, P. M. After lecture several persons

repaired to the place where Confociation sat, to enquire whether they were like to come to the meeting-house that day, and were told by some of the members of Confociation that they could not publish their result that night, for they had not accomplished their business ; upon which the people went home : Soon after which it was resolved by Confociation, or at least by some of them, to repair to the meeting-house that evening, and read their result ; and being told that the people were gone home, some of them replied, that is nothing to us, they might have staid if they would, we must not delay our business for the people——accordingly about sun-down they came to the meeting-house, read their result, and then repaired to their quarters.

All the above circumstances attending the proceedings of Confociation at *West-Stafford* appeared in public, and when occasion shall require, may be substantially authenticated by great numbers of eye and ear witnesses.

*N. B.* SINCE the late Confociation at *West-Stafford* undertook to justify their procedure by quotations from Saybrook agreement, it is meet some *special* remarks should be made upon these quotations. Among the articles for the administration of Church



discipline, Art. 3, is the first cited by Confociation in the following words, " That all cases of scandal that shall fall out within the circuit of any of the aforelaid Confociations, shall be brought to a council of the elders and also messengers of the churches within said circuit." It will doubtless be observed by the reader that the Confociation was convened for the express purpose of *judging upon doctrines said to be false and dangerous, &c.* and that they cited this article to prove they had a right to convene for this purpose. But perhaps Confociation meant to found their right upon the scriptures referred to in the article. The first scripture cited under the article, is 3. John ix. 10. "*I wrote unto the Church: But Diotrephes, who loveth to have pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Therefore if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.*" Because St. John complained of some disingenuous and unfriendly conduct of one *Diotrephes*, therefore the North Confociation in *Hartford* county had a right to convene at *West-Stafford*, to judge upon false and dangerous doctrines! The next scripture cited in the article, is 1 Cor. xvi. 1. "*Now concern-*

ing the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the church of Galatia, even so do ye." Because St. Paul desired the church at Corinth to make a contribution for the poor brethren at Jerusalem, therefore the Consociation had right to make creeds and confessions of faith for the pastor of the church at West-Stafford ! The next scripture is Gal. vi. 1, 2. " Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted : Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Because St. Paul exhorted the church at Galatia to treat an offending brother with humanity and tenderness, therefore the Consociation had a right to condemn and censure the pastor of the church at West-Stafford for preaching, as they judged, false and dangerous doctrines ! And because St. Paul moved that the christians at Galatia should bear one another's burdens, therefore it was an act of kindness in the Consociation to make creeds and confessions for the pastor and church at West-Stafford, and so to ease them of the burden of making them for themselves ! The next scripture is, 2 Cor. xiii. 2. " I told you before, and foretell you as if I were present the second time ; and being absent, now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that if I come a-

gain, I will not spare." Because St. Paul gave repeated assurances to the church at *Corinth*, that, if he should chance that way again, he would administer proper reproofs to any that had or should behave themselves unbecomingly ; therefore the North Confociation in *Hartford* county had a right to judge upon articles of doctrines, and to censure and excommunicate the pastor of the church at *West-Stafford*, for preaching such doctrines as they judged heterodox. The next scripture is *Acts* xv. 23. " *And wrote letters by them after this manner, the apostles, elders and brethren, send greeting unto the brethren which are of the gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia.*" Because the apostles, elders and brethren, at *Jerusalem*, sent letters to the gentile churches in *Antioch*, *Syria*, and *Celicia* ; telling them that they would do well to abstain from meats offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication, therefore the North Confociation in the county of *Hartford* had a right to condemn and excommunicate the pastor of the church at *West-Stafford*, if he would not abstain from preaching such doctrines as they judged disagreeable to the gospel. The next is *1 Cor.* viii. 23. " *Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you : Or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches*



*and the glory of Christ."* Because *St. Paul* thought it expedient that *Titus* and others, *Luke* and *Apollos* as is generally supposed, should be joined with him, to convey to the poor saints at *Jerusalem*, the contributions of the churches, and sent them to *Antioch* to spirit up the brethren there to make ready their contributions against he should come along, therefore the North Consociation in *Hartford* county had a right to go to *West-Stafford* to censure and condemn the pastor of the church there for preaching false doctrines ! Hence every one sees that if the Consociation meant to found their right upon the scriptures cited under this article, that right was indisputably proved ; for I know no better right than that founded on the bible !!— The other article cited by Consociation is the 5th, in these words, " That when any case is orderly brought before any council of the churches, it shall there be heard and determined, which shall be a final issue, and all parties therein concerned, shall sit down, and be determined thereby." The reader will bear in mind, that the case brought before the venerable Consociation at *West-Stafford* was denied to be orderly before that body ; and that they cite this article to prove that said case was cognizable, and finally to be determined by them. Now as the article itself does not *expressly* say, that false and

dangerous doctrines are a case that may be orderly brought before a Consociation, therefore, as in the other article, they doubtless meant that the scriptures here cited proved this. The first scripture is *Acts* xv. but as no verse in particular is quoted we cannot say any thing in reply. The next scripture is *1 Cor.* v. 5. "*To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the Flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*" Because St. Paul directed the church at *Corinth* to deliver to Satan the man who had been guilty of such gross fornication as to marry his father's wife, therefore the charge of preaching false and dangerous doctrines was orderly brought before the North Consociation in *Hartford* county, Nov. 2, 1779 ! The next scripture is *2 Cor.* ii. 6, 11. "*Sufficient to such an one is the punishment which was inflicted of many---least Satan should get an advantage of us ; for we are not ignorant of his devices.*" Because St. Paul now directs the church of *Corinth* to remove the censure they had passed upon the fornicator, since it had wrought for his good ; lest the devil should make a bad use of their want of humanity and tenderness, therefore the charge of false doctrines, &c. was orderly brought before and finally to be issued by the North Consociation in *Hartford* county last fall, at *West-Stafford* ! The next is *Philip.*

iii. 15. "*Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded : And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even that unto you.*" Because St. Paul exhorted the christians at *Philippi*, who were sufficiently grounded in the first principles of christianity, to go on to perfection ; and encouraged those who were not, that God would teach and instruct them ; therefore the charge of false and dangerous doctrines lay scripturally before Consociation at *West-Stafford*, and must be finally determined by them ! The next scripture pertinent to the purpose, is *Rom. xiv. 2, 3.* "*For one believeth that he may eat all things, another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth ; for God hath received him.*" Because St. Paul would have christians act according to their own inclinations in eating meat or herbs, or any thing else, without censuring one another for different notions about these things ; therefore, it is beyond all dispute, the case of false doctrines was very orderly and scripturally before Consociation at *West-Stafford*, Nov. 2, 1779 ; and that they had authority finally to decide it, without any privilege of appeal, or benefit of clergy.

As these two articles are as clearly founded on scripture as any other, that would have served the purpose of Consociation ; and as



every one sees at first view, that these scriptures have not even the most distant reference to the business of Confociation at West-Stafford last fall; we are persuaded the reader will judge very favourably of the opposition that was made to the proceedings of that body, and also of the propriety of adopting the holy scriptures, and not platforms of human compofure, as a rule of faith and practice.

---

# A P P E N D I X

Containing a RENUNCIATION  
of SAYBROOK PLATFORM,  
(usually so called) with the Reasons of  
it.

To the GENTLEMEN of the CONSOCIATION  
now convened in this place :

**I** BEG leave to make the following representation, viz. When I was ordained in the ministry at *Windsor*, I objected against adopting Saybrook Platform as a model of church-discipline. But never did I dream of such an interpretation of that book, as should warrant any *ecclesiastick council* in judging upon articles of *faith*, for any preacher, professor, or church of christians on earth, until the affair of Mr. Sage at West-Simsbury. And I doubt not it will be easily recollected by a number of gentlemen of the Consociation who were *then* present, that I then made very great opposition to any decision of Consociation in Mr. Sage's disfavour, on account of his *doctrines* or *articles of faith* ; not because I was of his opinion in every article, but because I considered Consociation as having no authority to judge upon *articles of faith*,

to his disadvantage, or the disadvantage of any man, or body of men, on earth, either from Platform or the word of God. Gentlemen, I am conscientiously of the same mind still. And from the recent experience I have had of what I imagine to be a misinterpretation of Saybrook Platform, I take this opportunity to signify my absolute renunciation of that book, as the *rule* of my *faith* or *manners*, so far as it can possibly be interpreted to signify a right in any man, or body of men on earth, to judge upon *articles* of *Faith*, not *heretical*, to the least disadvantage of any preacher, professor, or church of Christ on earth. And also so far as said book gives *authority* to any ecclesiastick council, of whatever name, to *decide* and *finally determine* any cause whatsoever, so that all parties shall be obliged to sit down contented. If a matter of difficulty ariseth in any church, or between any pastor and church, I doubt not of the *expediency* of asking counsel and advice of neighbouring pastors and churches ; and, in this case, an ecclesiastick council have right to give their opinion, counsel and advice ; but no *authority*, in my opinion, to enforce any *judgment* or *decision* of theirs upon pastor or church. If the pastor and church, or whatever parties concerned, do mutually agree to abide the result of council ; the council have, in this case, the



same right to give their opinion, &c. as though no such agreement had taken place; and this opinion of theirs is now become decisive; not on account or any *authority* in the council to make it so, but because of the mutual agreement of the *parties concerned*, that it shall be so.

My church and people, so far as I am acquainted, are perfectly of my mind, as above expressed, with regard to the authority of ecclesiastick councils, both as to articles of faith and doctrines of religion, and all other matters cognizable by such councils.

DAN FOSTER,

Stafford, Nov. 5, 1779.

The reasons of the above RENUNCIATION follow.

CHRIST Jesus hath given each individual in his church, a right to *judge* for themselves, as to the interpretation of the holy scriptures, and to receive as articles of their faith, or reject whatever *they* shall *judge* agreeable or repugnant to the Bible. For proof, *Mat. xx. 25, 26. xxiii. 8, 9. But be ye not called Rabbi: For one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father, upon the earth; for*

one is your father, which is in Heaven. Mark x. 42, 43, 44. John v. 39. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life. And they are they that testify of me. Acts xvii. 11, 12. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, &c. Rom. xiv. 1—12. 1 Cor. ii. 5. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Gal. i. 6—10. 1 Pet. v. 3. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the Flock. 1 John iv. 1: Beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

It is agreeable to the mind of Christ that every professor of his religion, whether preacher or hearer, should exercise this *divine right*. For it cannot be supposed that Christ should give Christians a right he would not be willing they should use.

It is also agreeable to the mind of Christ, that christians, whilst they conscientiously exercise this *sacred right of private judgment*, should be unmolested and undisturbed, and not subject to any disadvantages whatsoever, on account of any differing opinions or sentiments in religion, which may possibly result from the exercise of this common right.

Therefore no man, or body of men, act according to the mind of Christ, when they give the least molestation or disturbance to any christians, whether preachers or hearers; or subject them to the least disadvantage, on account of any of their different interpretations of sacred scriptures, opinions or sentiments whatsoever.

If these two last propositions were not true, then christians might, according to the mind of Christ, be subjected to molestation and disturbance, and to many and great disadvantages, even whilst they were acting conscientiously according to the mind of Christ; exercising a right which he had given them; and indeed *for this very conduct* of theirs! which never will be admitted by any friend to *revealed religion*.

To withdraw christian communion and fellowship from any christian preacher or professor, or from any church of Christ, on account of differing opinions or sentiments in religion, is to subject that preacher, professor, or church of Christ, from whom christian communion and fellowship is withdrawn, to many and great disadvantages; it is to deprive them of all those advantages, whatever they may be, which result from christian communion and fellowship. Therefore the undeniable and unavoidable inference from the whole argument is this, That it is not



agreeable to the mind of Christ, that any man, or body of men on earth, or any ecclesiastick council, of whatever name or *boasted authority*, should withdraw christian communion and fellowship from any christian preacher, professor or church, on account of differing opinions and sentiments in religion.

Again, as the Bible is the christian's *only rule of faith*, and as all christians have the *sacred right* above spoken of; no individual christian, whether preacher or hearer, has a right to impose subscription to any proposition of religion, not *expressly* contained in the Bible, on any other individual christian, whether preacher or hearer: For as far as any such right of imposition takes place, so far the right of private judgment is destroyed. A right in *A* to *judge* for himself, and to receive or reject any proposition in religion, not *expressed* in the Bible, according to the result of his own judgment; and a right in *B* to impose subscription to any proposition, or any number of propositions in religion, not *expressly* contained in the Bible, on *A*, cannot possibly consist together. *A*'s right is clearly and undeniably proved above, and indeed is indisputable among all true protestants; *B*, therefore, undoubtedly has no such right of imposition. But if *B* has no right of imposition on *A*, then he has no right to deprive *A* of any privilege or advantage whatsoever,

because he differs from him, though ever so much, in his belief of any propositions not expressed in the Bible. If B therefore withdraws communion from A, because A's creed is not the same with B's, he does what is absolutely wrong and injurious ; he assumes to himself a right to judge for A, and in so doing denies A's right to judge for himself, contrary to what is generally acknowledged, and hath been demonstrated above. But if B has no such right of imposition and deprivation, &c. as above, then B, C, D, E, F and G, when met together in council, have no right of imposition on A, or to deprive him of any the least privilege or advantage whatsoever, because he differs from them in religious sentiments, and will not renounce his own and subscribe their creed, or any human creed that can be named, that is not composed in the express words of holy scriptures. For the whole right of B, C, D, &c. when met in council, is certainly made up of the *sum total* of their individual rights. B has no more right in council, than he had in his single capacity ; in which single capacity he hath just been proved to have none at all. But B has as much right as C, or D, or any other member of the council ; which is none at all. When met together therefore in council, though it should be with all *conceivable gravity and solemnity*, and the greatest

*parade* and air of *clerical authority*, they have no right to impose on A, require him to renounce his *own*, or subscribe *their* creed ; or to deprive him of any privilege whatsoever, because he differs from them in the articles of his faith, and will not renounce them and come over to their side, but insists upon enjoying and using that liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free. For when met in council, the rights of B, C, D, E, F and G, are brought into one sum, *and six times nothing is nothing* ! and this is the *sum total* of the council's right : For ever so many cyphers will not amount to a sum. **A** very limited *authority*.

Again, let us view this withdrawing communion in a point of light a little different from the foregoing. B insists upon withdrawing communion from A, because A preaches or professes false and dangerous doctrines. A declares what he preaches or professes, to be the sincere dictates of his judgment, regulated by reason and the Bible. B declares the same as to his doctrines and articles of faith. Both A and B have collected their tenets from the same sources, reason and the Bible ; and in the exercise of the same *right* of private judgment, A is perfectly willing B should enjoy all the liberty *he* does ; and is not disposed to give him the least disturbance or molestation



imaginable ; but really desirous he should enjoy all the privileges of christian society. *A* is willing to subscribe the bible as his *only rule of faith* ; nor does he preach or hold any one proposition contrary or repugnant to any *express* proposition of the Bible. The whole difference between *A* and *B* lies in their different interpretations of the holy scriptures. But after all their mutual pains and labour to accommodate differences of sentiment, they are each of the same opinion as before. *A* still retains however his tolerant disposition towards *B*, and is as willing now as ever that he should enjoy his own opinions in undisturbed quiet. *B* is dissatisfied and will not exercise charity and toleration with respect to *A*, but insists upon withdrawing communion from him, and depriving him of the privileges of christian society and fellowship.

The question now is, whether *B* does not treat *A* injuriously and deny him the right of private judgment ? I am inclined to take the affirmative of this question, which may be clearly demonstrated thus ; *B* can have no right to withdraw christian communion and fellowship from *A*, but on supposition of *A*'s having acted wrong and contrary to the clear dictates of Christ's religion ; and if *B* has no right to withdraw communion from *A*, then in doing it he hath treated him injuriously, and denied him the right of private judg-

ment. These things will be conceded by every one. Now *A*'s wrong and antichristian conduct hath been this, that he hath carefully and impartially searched the holy scriptures, and consequently embraced certain tenets and sentiments in religion, differing indeed from those of *B*, but such as he conscientiously believes to be consistent with the Bible. If *A* hath acted wrong and contrary to the clear dictates of Christ's religion in so doing, then it is certainly wrong and contrary to the clear dictates of Christ's religion, that *A* should search and examine the bible, and form his own religious creed according to the result of his own judgment : and if so, *A* hath no right of private judgment ; which was one thing to be proved. *B* hath then certainly denied *A*'s right of private judgment ; which he had no right to do : and therefore he hath treated *A* injuriously ; which was the other thing to be proved. So that *B* cannot withdraw communion from *A*, on account of *A*'s religious sentiments, as being ever so different from his own, without treating him injuriously, and denying him the right of private judgment.

Here *B* may perhaps say, I do not mean to deny *A*'s right of private judgment : I only claim the same right to judge for myself, which I willingly allow *A* to enjoy ; *i. e.* a right to judge whether I may, or may

not consistently hold communion with *A*. I pretend not to judge for *A*, or to deny the right he hath to judge for himself ; as to all the articles of his faith.

I know this is *B*'s only subterfuge : But it is a mean, sorry shift, make the best of it !

The fallacy of this observation of *B*, is palpable. It is apparently fallacious, from what hath been said above. I intreat *B* to advert to this one consideration, viz. If he has no right to withdraw communion from *A*, on account of any differing sentiments in religious matters, he certainly has no right to judge he has. For no man has a right to judge wrong. Besides, *B* takes the thing to be proved for granted, *i. e.* that he may withdraw communion from *A* on account of differing sentiments in religion. That he may not, I have endeavoured to demonstrate above. But further yet, we may easily perceive the absurdity of any such right in *B*, if we only consider that *B* has no right to withdraw communion from *A*, that *A* hath not to withdraw communion from *B*, on account of differing sentiments in religion : For undoubtedly *B* differs as much from *A*, as *A* doth from *B*, in his religious creed. So that *A* and *B* have equal right to excommunicate, on account of difference of sentiment.

But what shocking absurdity is here ! and what notorious impeachment of the wisdom



and goodness of Jesus Christ the head of the church ! Must the blessed Jesus, that most warm and sincere friend of mankind, who, influenced by his unparalleled love to the church, gave his own life a sacrifice for her ! Must *he*, who is the wisdom as well as power of God, be supposed to have left things in such state in his church, that two christians, or two churches, should in their turns, excommunicate and be excommunicated by each other, and alternately denied the privileges of christian society and fellowship ! and this too for their fidelity and firm attachment to *him* as their *Lord and master*, and their conscientious adherence to those rights which *he himself* hath been pleased to grant them ! Far be it ! God forbid any such bold and impious impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of our divine redeemer.

This and other consequences, however shocking and blasphemous they may appear, cannot possibly be avoided, upon the supposition that one church, or one christian, hath a right to withdraw communion from another church, or christian, on account of differing sentiments in religion.

Indeed the idea of withdrawing communion on account of different sentiments in religion, is abhorrent from reason and common sense, as well as from the bible ; and contrary to the principles of the reformation

from popery : And those who withdraw communion on account of difference in religious sentiments, cannot possibly justify the reformation from popery, in any consistence with their conduct. Withdrawing communion, in *America*, signifies the same thing with dragooning, beheading, or burning in popish countries ; is practised upon the same principles, and to be justified by the same reasons ; And the genius of the civil government of this country, is the only thing which prevents those who withdraw communion from others, on account of differing sentiments in religion, from imprisoning, condemning, depriving and burning them.

An *heretick* is indeed to be rejected ; but not on account of any sentiments in religion which he holds, as differing from those of other men ; but because he breaks off from the communion of a christian church, that will not subscribe certain tenets he hath formed, as the rule of her faith ; which tenets and opinions are not *expressed* in her adopted rule of faith, the bible. Except the *heretick* and immoral christian, there is no character that is to be denied christian communion and fellowship, according to any laws of Christ I ever saw.

If a man subscribes and adopts the scriptures of the Old and New Testament as his *only* rule of faith and practice — if he, to all

appearance, fears God and works righteousness——is a peaceable and quiet member of the family, the church and the state, though he adopts sentiments and opinions in religion ever so different from those of some other man, some church, or many churches, from some ecclesiastick council, or from all ecclesiastick councils that ever have been, or ever will be, so long as time endures, if these tenets and opinions are not contrary to *clear, indubitable, express scripture*, no man, no church, no ecclesiastick council have any right, in my humble opinion, to withdraw communion from that man, or to subject him to the least conceivable inconvenience or disadvantage, on account of these differing tenets and opinions. Nor can any thing of this kind be done, by men uninspired, without great injury and cruel injustice to the man, and a palpable denial of the right of private judgment in matters of religion; without daring and presumptuous boldness, pride and arrogance, and the most shocking imputations upon the wisdom and goodness of the wisest and most beneficent personage in the universe !

That adopting the bible and subscribing the holy scriptures as the *only* rule of faith and practice is sufficient, and all that ought ever to be required of any man, whether preacher or professor, in order to christian



fellowship and communion, is evident from the scriptures themselves. 1 *John* iv. 1, 2, 3. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God : because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the spirit of God : every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh, is of God : and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh, is not of God.* Here the apostle is giving directions to a christian church, how they ought to treat those who pretended to be preachers of religion. And he tells the church how they might come to a safe and happy decision with reference to their reception and treatment of such pretenders, viz. by bringing them to a sure point of trial and religious test ; whether they did, or did not, confess that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh. If they confessed this they were to be received, if not, rejected. For to confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is, in effect, to confess that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God. For, if Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, these scriptures are certainly the word of God : And, if these scriptures are the word of God, then certainly Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. So that to confess either, is, in effect, the same thing. And to confess this, was, in *St. John's* day, sufficient to christian fellowship and

communion. The world was not so wise and sagacious then as it hath been since. It hath often been the case, since St. *John's* day, that men could not be heard as prophets, nor received to christian communion and fellowship, upon their confession that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, or subscription to the Old and New Testament as their *only rule of faith*. But in order to be qualified for the pulpit or communion table, men have been, and still are, obliged to subscribe long lists of articles of faith, and certain creeds and confessionals, catechisms, &c. And by these means men become *sound and orthodox divines, staunch Calvinists*; and, I may add, *arrant fools*! But I desire to thank God, I was never dubbed a Calvinist, or orthodox in this way! and I would be thankful for that *restraining grace*, that hath ever withheld my hand from subscribing any *creed, confession of faith, or catechism*, or any thing else of *human composition, as the rule of my faith or manners*!

It is indeed surprising men should have the presumption and effrontery to demand any thing but subscription to the bible, as a necessary prerequisite to preaching the gospel, or communing at the table of our Lord. Mr. *Locke's* observation upon this business of subscription to human creeds, &c. is worthy of special notice in this place. Says he,

“ For when they have determined the holy scriptures to be the only foundation of faith ; they nevertheless lay down certain propositions as fundamental, which are not in the scriptures ; and because others will not acknowledge these additional opinions of theirs, nor build upon them as if they were necessary and fundamental, they therefore make a separation in the church, either by withdrawing themselves from the others, or expelling the others from them. Nor does it signify any thing for them to say that their confessions and symbols are agreeable to scripture, and to the analogy of faith. For if they be conceived in the express words of scripture, there can be no question about them ; because those are acknowledged by all christians to be of divine inspiration, and therefore fundamental. But if they say, that the articles which they require to be professed, are consequences deduced from the scripture, it is undoubtedly well done of them to believe and profess such things as seem unto them to agreeable to the rule of faith ; but it would be very ill done to obtrude those things upon others, to whom they do not seem to be the indubitable doctrines of the scripture. For I do not think there is any man arrived to that degree of madness, as that he dare give out his consequences and interpretations of scripture as divine inspirati-



ons, and compare the articles of faith he has framed according to his own fancy with the authority of the scripture. I know there are some propositions so evidently agreeable to scripture, that no body can deny them to be drawn from thence ; but about those therefore there can be no difference. This only I say, that however clearly we may think this or the other doctrine to be deduced from scripture, we ought not therefore to impose it upon others, as a necessary article of faith, because we believe it to be agreeable to the rule of faith ; unless we would be content also that other doctrines should be imposed upon us in like manner ; and that we should be compelled to receive all the different and contradictory opinions of *Lutherans, Calvinists, Remonstrants, Anabaptists*, and other sects, which the contrivers of symboles, systems and confessions are accustomed to deliver to their followers as genuine and necessary deductions from the holy scripture.

“ I cannot but wonder at the extravagant arrogance of those men who think that they themselves can explain things necessary to salvation more clearly than the *holy ghost*, the infinite and eternal wisdom of God.” Thus far Mr. *Locke's* Letter concerning toleration. p. 75, 76. I am willing to profess myself of the same mind with this great and good man now quoted, as to this unreasonable

and odious business of making and subscribing human creeds and confessions.

The Dissenting Gentleman, says, p. 307, 308, " The *holy scriptures* your Lordship, and all protestant divines, acknowledge to be a *perfect rule of faith* : In them all needful and important doctrines are *so plainly* revealed, in *words* dictated by the *holy ghost*, that no *sincere* person can possibly mistake concerning them, so as dangerously to err. Subscription, therefore, to these scriptures, is all that the interest of *truth* and of *religion* does require. Now, should any man upon earth, or any body of men, take upon them to draw up articles or formulas of faith, in words *different* from the holy scriptures, and to propose them as a *rule of faith*, or a *test of truth* to others ; what, my Lord, is the real nature, or the proper language of such an action ? Is it not plainly this ; that he thinks himself able to define the doctrines of *revelation* in apter and more proper terms than those of the *holy ghost* ? Does he not in effect say, that the great truths of religion, as they stand revealed in the scriptures (in words which not *man's wisdom*, but which the wisdom of God dictated) are not so distinctly and clearly expressed as *man's wisdom*, (yea, as his own wisdom) is able to express them ? And is not this, my Lord, presumptuously to set himself up as a *corrector* of

the holy ghost ? To declare himself capable of *mending* the revelation ! and to profess himself *authorised* to dictate to the faith of others, and to interpret the scriptures for them !"

I frankly confess I see not why the requiring subscription to any *articles of faith*, framed by men, and not conceived in the words of scripture, as a necessary prerequisite of christian or ministerial communion and fellowship, is not an high, implicit impeachment both of the wisdom and goodness of God. The holy ghost hath certainly explained the articles of christian faith, so far as he thought necessary for all the purposes of christian society in this world, and eternal happiness in the world to come. Both the goodness and wisdom of God would prompt him to do this : Yea, he hath expressly told us he hath done it, 2 *Tim.* iii. 16, 17. Now for men to frame certain tenets and propositions in religion, according to their own fancy, not conceiving them in any expressions of holy scriptures, and impose them on others, *as articles of faith*, and require subscription to them, as necessary to christian communion and fellowship in this world, or happiness in the next ; is certainly to do and require more, in order to christian communion in this world, and happiness in the next, than the wisdom and goodness of God have ever



moved him to do and require for these purposes. Either what is done in this business of creed-making and subscription by men, is not at all necessary for christian communion here, or happiness hereafter ; or else the wisdom and goodness of God have not done all that is necessary for these purposes in the sacred scriptures. If what men have done, and yet continue to do in this business of creeds and subscriptions, be unnecessary for the purposes mentioned above ; then, why are creeds composed, and subscription to them required ? If this business of creed-making and subscription be necessary ; why hath not the wisdom of God discerned this necessity ? And why hath not his goodness excited him to provide some effectual remedy against the wretched consequences of leaving this business of creed-making to men ? For I make no doubt God hath a sufficient capacity to frame a creed that would be less exceptionable and more generally subscribed by christians, and with far greater satisfaction, than any creed that hath ever been composed by men's hands. And I imagine such a divine creed, written with the finger of God, though it should be *imposed*, and subscription to it required, would not occasion such general uneasiness among christians, nor be attended with so much complaint and cry of *religious tyranny*, nor be followed with such detesta-

ble and pernicious consequences, as have always taken place upon the imposition of all human creeds without exception.

God himself testified, in an awful manner, his high displeasure at the imposition of the first human creed; that made and imposed by the *Nicene council*, A. D. 325. And it cannot be shewn from ecclesiastick history that one good consequence ever followed the imposition of a creed made by men, and not conceived in the expressions of holy scriptures.

But though it be thus demonstrably contrary to reason and common sense, contrary to the scriptures, and an high blasphemous impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of God, that men should make and impose creeds, confessions of faith, catechisms, &c. yet creed-mongers will have something to plead in favour of this business of creed-making: And I expect nothing more, than that, in consequence of my attempts to set at naught this craft, I shall hear a mighty cry, similar, it may be, to that *St. Paul* heard at *Athens*, occasioned by his setting at naught the craft of the silversmiths, who made shrines for *Diana*. I fancy the business of creed-making is not quite so gainful, especially in protestant countries, as was the craft of making shrines for *Diana*; yet as it is so sweet and gratifying to men of haughty,

proud, assuming, arrogant spirits, to be dictators of other men's creeds and confessions; such men may be as much incensed when this business is spoken against, as were the silversmiths of old, when *Diana* was spoken against.

But what will the sticklers for human creeds and confessions say? They will undoubtedly object that, if men subscribe only the holy scriptures, then preachers, professors and churches may presently grow corrupt, pervert the scriptures to patronize their errors, degenerate from the faith, &c. &c. Just as if the same men who would corrupt the word of God, would not also corrupt a creed or confession made by men! The Dissenting Gentleman says on this matter, "Will it be said——But crafty and corrupt men pervert the words of the *holy ghost*, and screen dangerous errors under scriptural forms. Let it be said: And will not crafty and corrupt men as easily pervert, and as lightly violate and break through all the articles and forms which *human skill* can devise, or *human prudence* prescribe? Does not the plainest reason and nature of the thing speak, that thus it will be? Has not the experience of *fourteen hundred* years put it beyond all doubt? Will any articles or forms of doctrine prove a fence against a man of an *insincere* and *corrupt* heart, or



keep him out of the church ? No : He will ever swim with the stream ; he will declare or subscribe any thing, as his worldly interest directs. No, my Lord, it is men of *virtue* and *integrity* only, your Lordship well knows, that can possibly be affected here : It is men of *principle* and *conscience* only, that these subscriptions are ever capable of keeping out of the church : So that, if rightly considered, it is not in their nature to be the least guard against error, nor the least security to truth. And when withal it is remembered, how in all ages of the church they have been most mischievously employed by the several parties of *christians*, as they alternately prevailed ! What wrecks they have made of conscience ! What sacrifices of integrity to human ignorance and pride ! What engines they have proved in the hands of the rulers of the darkness of this world, to torture and oppress good men, and to exalt and aggrandize the bad !——Scarce any thing can be more amazing, than that a measure so notoriously preposterous and absurd ; a measure so directly tending to bring *corruption* into the church, and to keep integrity and conscience out ; should ever have been patronized, and even vehemently urged, by men, unquestionably both wise and good.”

P. 308, 309.

A little attention to ecclesiastick history

will convince any impartial enquirer after truth, that all the endeavours that ever have been made, either by individuals or by councils and synods, to effect a *uniformity of opinion and sentiment in religious matters*, in the church of Christ, have been, not only vain and fruitless, but attended with the most baneful and pernicious consequences. Where it can be shewn that a single error hath ever been suppressed by framing and imposing creeds and confessions of faith, it may easily be shewn, that an hundred have received their rise and propagation *by these very means*. And as it constantly and invariably hath been the case in the church, that hatred, variance, wrath, strife, seditions, emulations and heresies have followed the endeavours of of creed-mongers and confession-makers, to bring about a *uniformity in religious opinions and sentiments* in the christian church, so we have all the reason in the world to believe, that these sad and dismal consequences will ever follow such endeavours. Men do not look alike, nor speak, nor write alike : And just as vain and sleeveless a business would it be, in my opinion, for any man, or body of men, to undertake to effect a *uniformity of visages, manner of speaking, and hand-writing* amongst mankind, as to effect a *uniformity in religious tenets and sentiment*. And whoever can effect the former, may perhaps ef-

fect the latter. Why then such a mighty cry about *orthodoxy* in religion? We never hear of an *orthodox* face, an *orthodox* manner of speaking or writing amongst mankind. "It is great pity," says the author of *Remarks upon President Clap's History, &c.* "as charity is our distinguishing mark as christians, that we exercise it much less in religion, than in the common affairs of life. Agreeable to which, says an author, I do not believe that there are two men upon earth who think exactly alike upon every subject; and yet our different tastes in meat, drink, building and dress make not the least difference in human society; nor is it likely that they ever will, unless we establish by law, and tack preferments to one particular mode of eating, drinking, building and dressing; then indeed we may expect to see the established orthodox *mason*, *cook* and *taylor*, very zealous and loud for conformity and penalties: But at present ten men, in ten different suits, can dine together upon ten different dishes; and give ten different opinions upon one piece of painting or architecture, without breaking friendship and good humour: If indeed they be drunk with wine or zeal, they will be apt to fight about the church, or something else: But why men in their senses should clamour and quarrel at their neighbour's particular conscience, any more than at his particular palate,



no reason can be assigned, but the delusions of priestcraft, operating upon its genuine issue, bigotry."---p. 56, 57.

So long as mankind are of different geniuses and dispositions of soul; are differently educated in families, in publick or private schools; go into different tracts of reading and thinking; and shall agree to hold it as an *unalienable right, sacred from the deity*, that they may search, examine and judge for themselves in all matters of religion; they will most certainly differ from one another in their religious tenets and sentiments.

As *Saybrook Platform* gives a right to any ecclesiastick council to decide and finally determine any cause whatsoever, I dissent from it for this reason, viz. that, as there is no institution, precept or example of any ecclesiastick council in the New Testament; so the whole authority of such a council must be derived from its constituents, *the parties concerned*; and therefore such a council can have no authority but what is given them to decide any cause whatsoever.

Thus much I think proper to offer, at present, as a vindication of my renunciation of *Saybrook Platform*, so far as I view it as differing from the *holy scriptures*, either in its doctrines or discipline. But as I have suggested that *that* book is not so criminal, as that the judgment of an ecclesiastick council

upon articles of faith, or doctrines of religion, to the least conceivable prejudice or disadvantage of any preacher, professor or church, can be built upon it, or vindicated from it; I mean now to shew that the sentiments of our worthy ancestors, the compilers of that book, were perfectly the same with those I have attempted to vindicate in these papers. In the preface to their Confession of Faith, they say, p. 5, 6, " This Confession of Faith we offer as our firm persuasion, well and fully grounded upon the *holy scriptures*, and commend the same unto all, and particularly to the people of our colony, to be examined, accepted and constantly maintained." How is this? Did these good men mean to impose their confession of faith upon the people of Connecticut, and absolutely to require their subscription? Let them answer for themselves. " We do not assume to ourselves, that any thing be taken upon trust from us, but commend to our people these following counsels."

I. " That you be immoveably and unchangeably agreed in the only sufficient and invariable rule of religion, which is the holy scripture, the fixed canon, incapable of addition or diminution."

II. " That you be determined by this rule in the whole of religion. That your faith be right and divine, the word of God



must be the foundation of it, and the authority of the word the reason of it."

III. " That you be well grounded in the firm truths of religion. We have willingly taken pains to add the holy scriptures, whereon every point of faith contained in this Confession doth depend, and is borne up by, and commend the same to your diligent perusal, that you be established in the truth, and your *faith rest upon its proper basis, the word of God.*"

IV. Again, p. 8. " That having applied the rule of holy scripture to all the articles of this Confession, and found the same, *upon trial*, the unchangeable and eternal truths of God : you remember and hold them fast, contend earnestly for them as the faith once delivered to the Saints."

Again, in their Confession of Faith itself, Art. X. " The supreme judge by which all *controversies* of religion are to be determined, and all *decrees* of councils, *opinions* of ancient writers, *doctrines* of men and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the holy scripture delivered by the spirit ; into which scripture so delivered our faith is finally resolved."

I now willingly leave it to the world to judge, whether the compilers of *Saybrook Platform*, did not firmly believe that all



christians were happy in the enjoyment of the *divine* and *unalienable right* to search the *holy scriptures*; and to receive or reject whatever opinions and sentiments they judged agreeable or repugnant to that unerring standard: And consequently that no man, or body of men, had *authority* to frame confessions of faith and impose them on others.

These things being undeniable, how any man, or body of men, should presume to judge for others, as to *articles of faith* and *doctrines of religion*, and to censure and condemn their fellow christians, on account of their differing *sentiments* and *opinions*, as to the *interpretation of holy scriptures*; and even *withdraw communion* and *fellowship* from those who differ from them, and deny them many of the advantages of christian society; or even any advantages whatsoever; and pretend at the same time a warrant for this conduct from *Saybrook Platform*, and, what is more shocking yet, from the *New Testament*; must be resolved either into their shameful misinterpretation of the Platform and New Testament both; or their bold and daring presumption, pride, arrogance, and itch for dominion over others consciences.

It is a shame and scandal to those who conduct in this unreasonable and unscriptural manner, if not to religion itself; that it should

be 'told in Gath, or published in the streets of Askelon : ' For 'the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice, the daughters of the uncircumcised will triumph : ' The enemies of our holy profession will blaspheme, when they shall behold christians crumbling into parts and factions, condemning and anathematizing one another, excommunicating and being excommunicated, and alternately depriving and being deprived of the advantages of christian society and communion : Because they cannot tolerate one another in searching and examining the sacred canon, and believing or rejecting what they shall judge agreeable or repugnant to it !

I will conclude what I shall offer on this subject with that very remarkable paragraph of the renowned *Chillingworth*, which, I fancy, no true protestant will read or hear, but with great satisfaction, especially when they consider that it is the language of a great man, converted from popery by his diligent search of the *sacred scriptures*. Addressing himself to a writer of the church of *Rome*, he thus speaks in vindication of the protestant cause, " Know then, Sir, that when I say the religion of protestants is in truth to be preferred before yours ; as on the one side, I do not understand by your religion the doctrine of *Bellarmino* or *Baronius*, or any other private man amongst you ; nor

the doctrine of the *Sorbonne* or of the *Jesuits*, or of the *Dominicans*, or of any other particular company or society amongst you ; but that wherein you all agree, or profess to agree, the doctrine of the council of *Trent* ; so accordingly on the other side, by the religion of protestants, I do not understand the doctrine of *Luther* or *Calvin*, or *Melancthon*, nor the confession of *Augsburgh* or *Geneva*, nor the catechism of *Heidelberg*, nor the articles of the church of *England* ; no, nor the harmony of protestant creeds and confessions ; but that wherein they all agree, and which they all subscribe with one accord, as the undoubted perfect rule of their faith and actions, that is, the bible. The bible, I say, the bible only, is the religion of protestants, whatsoever else they believe besides it : And the plain, irrefragable, and indubitable consequences of it, well may they hold as matters of opinion, but as matters of faith and religion, neither can they with coherence to their own grounds believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others, without most high and schismatical presumption. I, for my part, after a long, and (as I verily believe and hope) impartial search of the true way to eternal happiness, do profess plainly that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot, but upon this rock only. I see plainly, and with mine own eyes, that there



are popes against popes, councils against councils, some fathers against others, the same fathers against themselves, a consent of fathers of one age, against a consent of fathers of another age, the church of one age against the church of another age. Traditional interpretations of scripture are pretended; but there are few or none to be found. No tradition but only of scripture can derive itself from the fountain, but may be plainly proved to be brought in, in such an age after Christ, or that in such an age it was not: In a word, there is no sufficient certainty but of scripture only, for any considering man to build upon. This, therefore, and this only, I have reason to believe, this I will profess, according to this I will live, and for this, if there be occasion, I will not only willingly, but gladly, loose my life; though I should be sorry that Christians should take it from me. Propose me any thing out of this book, and require whether I believe or no, and seem it never so incomprehensible to human reason, I will subscribe it with hand and heart; as knowing no demonstration can be stronger than this, God hath said so, therefore it is true. In other things, I will take no man's liberty of judging from him, neither shall any man take mine from me. I will think no man the worse man, nor the worse christian, I will love no man the less, for differing in

pinion from me ; and what measure I mete to others, I expect from them again. I am fully assured that God does not, and therefore men ought not, to require any more of any man than this : To believe the *scripture* to be God's word, to endeavour to find the true sense of it, and to live according to it." *History of Religion*, p. 55, 56, 57.

DAN FOSTER.

*Windsor*, November 22, 1779.

15 OC 61